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"WHO IS SYLVIA?"

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"She turned back and waved her hand; both hands, to him."

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"WHO IS SYLVIA?"

BY

MARION AMES TAGGART

ILLUSTRATED

BY

VERA CLERE

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK

DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY

1922

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First Edition

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OCT 6 1922

TO
MARTHA MACDONALD
WITH LOVE

—

"Who is Sylvia? What is she,
That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair and wise is she;
The Heaven such grace did lend her,
That she might admired be.

"Is she kind as she is fair,—
For beauty lives with kindness:
Love doth to her eyes repair,
To help him of his blindness;
And being helped inhabits there.

"Then to Sylvia let us sing,
That Sylvia is excelling;
She excels each mortal thing
Upon the dull earth dwelling:
To her garlands let us bring."

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"WHO IS SYLVIA?"

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"Who Is Sylvia?"

CHAPTER I

"Who Is Sylvia?"

TALL, graceful, and remarkably pretty, her "shining morning face" full of a nameless charm, radiating happiness, Sylvia Bell came downstairs and out on the piazza on the morning after her eighteenth birthday.

Her adoring Irish terrier, who had been lying with his nose stretched out on his paws, scowling from the intentness with which he listened for her step, jumped up to meet her in a rapture so keen that no words could have expressed it, consequently his whines answered as well as words to welcome her.

"The top of the morning to you, Charles O'Malley the Irish Dragoon!" cried Sylvia, heartily returning his caresses. "That was a fine party we had yesterday entirely! I'm not a bit tired after it, thank you. I'd be ready for another in three days—but not if I had to be a year older in three days! I might have an unbirthday party, did you say? True, O'Malley; you've been reading 'Alice', or you wouldn't have

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thought of it! Caught you that time! Oh, what a dear thing you are! That wasn't a particularly funny joke, yet how heartily you laugh at it! It doesn't take much to make you and me laugh, does it, my broth of a boy? That shows how happy we are, dog of the world! But we know we're happy. And we're not infirm, not one bit, although you are five years old and I am eighteen; I'm afraid five is older for a terrier than eighteen is for a—terror!"

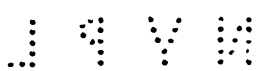
She turned away from her dog, softly whistling: "Believe Me if All Those Endearing Young Charms." Her father was coming downstairs and Sylvia's face grew still brighter as she stepped back to the door and waited for him, leaning against the casement.

"I don't quite, altogether, fully believe that, Fatherums, do you? Good morning, nicest of scientists!" she said.

"Good morning, dearest of scientists' assistants," retorted her father kissing her. "Don't believe what? That I am nicest of scientists? Certainly not!"

Sylvia gave his arm a little shake.

"You don't have to believe that! 'Faith is a virtue infused into our souls by which we believe without doubting'—Oh, I didn't mean to be irreverent! Well, then! You believe on faith what your senses do not reveal to you. So you don't *believe* that you are the nicest of scientists; your sense—common sense, anyway!—shows you that," she ended her definition triumphantly.



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"Nothing of the sort; I believe it on faith precisely; on your authority!" retorted Mr. Bell. "What is it you don't believe, then?"

"I forget," said Sylvia, frowning. "Oh, yes! If you'd paid attention to my beau-ti-ful whistling you'd have known, sir! I don't believe the man in that song. I'm awfully afraid that if 'all those endearing young charms' had faded away like fairy gifts, that she would not 'still have been adored as that moment she was,' and his heart's every wish would not 'entwine itself still around the dear ruins.' I s'pect he thought he meant it, but I'm afraid he would have got tired of ruins. What do you think, rather-nice Father?"

"Sylvia, why this dawning cynicism? Why this doubt of human nature's constancy?" demanded Mr. Bell in pretended consternation. "Is this the result of attaining eighteen, or is it the party?"

"I think they like them pretty, Daddy," replied Sylvia, demurely.

Mr. Bell threw back his head to laugh.

"True, my dear; *they* do! But they also like them bright, and true, and generally all-around sweet and agreeable to have about. You never have struck me as particularly interested in calling forth nor retaining admiration. Anything new?" Mr. Bell hinted.

"Nothing tellable, or I'd tell you; I tell you everything, silly and sensible," said Sylvia. "Well, then," she added, taking a sudden resolve to tell the untell-

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able, "it's that new boy from New York, Jack Jarvis. He took a fancy to my dear little Ruth Hapgood. I hadn't met him till yesterday, and then, just because ——Well, Daddy, my gown *was* becoming to me! And Jack Jarvis hovered; didn't remember Ruth, just because I was a new girl and he thought I looked nice!"

Her father's eyes, resting on her full of pride and admiration of her exquisite charm, her fineness of feature and expression, her vivacity and freedom from damaging self-consciousness, said for him that he hardly blamed Jack Jarvis. But all that his lips said was: "Perhaps when he sees you a second time and you are less a novelty, he will not 'hover,' but will return to his admiration of Ruth."

"He'd better," declared Sylvia with resolute compression of her lips. "I won't have it. The idea! Ruth is a perfect little peach, not tearingly pretty, but quite pretty enough; I love the way she looks at you, and she has an adorable nose, and lovely eyes! And, anyway, she is a darling! Jack Jarvis thrice over ought to be glad to be allowed to dust her shoes—even suède shoes, that you can't really dust! And, what's more, I won't have it! And what's still more I'll make it quite clear to him that Sylvia Bell is a cross and crabbed maiden lady, who doesn't care for his weathercock admiration!"

"I suppose you can't hang and quarter a young chap for admiring one girl sincerely and then admiring another still more, and quite as sincerely? You

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know this Jarvis is new 'in our midst,' as the newspapers would say, as if we were cannibals!—and his honour is not involved in continued fidelity to the first girl he met," hinted Mr. Bell, not daring to betray how amused he was by Sylvia's unmistakable disgust.

"What you are dying to say, my proud parent, is: 'How could he admire any one else when my daughter is in sight?' All very fine for you to look at it—and me—that way, but no one shall drop my little Ruth for me! Not that it matters; Ruthie is not crying for admiration, but any boy who snubs her for me must do it over my dead body!" declared Sylvia with a laugh, but nevertheless in earnest.

"Well, dear, I should think that would effectually put an end to your rivalry! Are we to breakfast this morning?" Sylvia's father suggested.

"Poor little 'bused Daddums!" Sylvia said. "Did it starve to death on its own piazza, almost quite to death, while its selfish child discussed nonsense?" Then, with a new swift realization of what she had often felt before, Sylvia said, tucking her hand into her father's arm, preparatory to a trip dining-roomward: "How dear you are, Father, always to *understand*, never to tire of what interests me, nor to find it trivial! What a lucky girl I am!—— And all the time the laboratory is waiting for us, with the Great Experiment under way!"

"My only Sylvia, I have often told you that what interests you, interests me, without merit or effort on

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my part. How could it be otherwise, since you are my one possession? And important as I feel that our laboratory research is, what experiment can possibly compare with the truly Great Experiment you and I are making in turning my little girl into a useful, noble woman?" Mr. Bell asked.

"It's beyond anything to know that's true, Father," said Sylvia, in a low voice.

An instant later she was slipping her hand out of her father's arm, with an excuse for deserting him, and was running through the house calling: "Cassie! Cassan-dra Bil—lings! The family is arrived, all the way from the sunny south, the front piazza! Is there a fine worm for these early birds? Ugh-h! If there is I do not want it! I get enough of worms in the lab., those squeeshy, unfascinating sea cucumbers!"

Cassandra Billings, devoted to the grown Sylvia as she had been to the motherless baby who had fallen to her care, the care to which Sylvia owed much of her physical strength and not a little of her moral fibre, came out of the kitchen to answer Sylvia. She was gaunt and tall, her colour and thinness suggested that she had been cut out of parchment, but, as Sylvia said, "all her expansion had been inward; her whole life was bound up in devotion to Mr. Bell and the little girl whom she had watched over and reared.

"If a chop would do as well as an early worm, Miss Sylvia," Cassandra said, "there may be one ready in about seven minutes. Mind; I don't say there will

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be, but I do hope there may be. If your father' ll eat his strawberries kind o' slow, connections may be close. I got some good berries last night; crate just come in. But as true's I'm standin' here this one's the worst yet, strong's that statement is." Cassandra lowered her voice and came nearer to Sylvia. "I was goin' to have those little sausages for breakfast, turned my back on the kitchen long enough to take a look into the ice box, and she burned 'em to a crisp! To—a—crisp, Sylvia Bell! Talk of early worms! That's about what those sausages looked like when I came back—gnurly worms! Little, and shrivelled, and *black!*" Cassandra chanted her adjectives in crescendo of pitch and accent. "This one's the worst of all. I said I couldn't stand her predecessors, but I can't so much as stand tryin' to stand Norah Leary."

Sylvia laughed, though she instantly checked herself. Since Susie, the girl who had gone away to be married two and a half years before, there had been what seemed like a moving-picture film of a procession of assistants to Cassandra marching through the Bell kitchen. Sylvia was used to Cassie's announcing that the one who chanced to be halted for that moment was the worst of all. Cassandra was kind, but Cassandra's requirements in the unfortunate young person who worked under her would have been attained only by a composite of Psyche's industry, Athena's wisdom, and Sabrina's spotlessness "sitting under the glassy, cool, translucent

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wave." Sylvia was often moved to pity the hapless incumbents; several times she had felt sure that she could have managed them, and managed with them satisfactorily, but she knew that interference would make matters worse, so she stifled her opinions and contented herself with charitable suggestions, as now.

"I've thought Norah looked bothered, Cassie," she said, gently. "Poor little thing, so far from home and all her kindred! I'm sorry about the sausages, but they are not an irreparable loss; it only sets breakfast late a few moments. I'd burn sausages, too, if I were worried."

"And you'd find excuses for people if it was the house they'd burned down! You don't know that the girl's bothered, for that matter. I fed those sausages to O'Malley and he sniffed at 'em good before he'd touch 'em. I do believe he thought I was tryin' to feed him black lead pencils!" said Cassandra, scornfully.

This time Sylvia's laugh rang out frankly. "In the meantime the chops may burn," she suggested.

"Jerusalem Halifax, gentleman! That's the truth; they may!" cried Cassie, rushing away.

Sylvia joined her father in the dining room, still laughing, but she only laid her finger warningly on her lips when he looked his inquiry as to what amused her.

It was agreeable to find the chops unburned when Cassie brought them in a few minutes later, and

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Sylvia announced that she felt ready and fit for work when she had disposed of her share of them.

Her father's laboratory—in which he had won victories in research work and an honourable name for himself among contemporaneous scientists, and in which the experiment from which he hoped the greatest result of his life was now under way in successive stages of experiments—stood but a short distance from the house, down a well-trodden gravelled walk, under noble old elms planted by past generations of the Bell family. Short as the distance was to the laboratory, Sylvia took her father's arm for the walk, but when she crossed the threshold she became wholly the laboratory assistant, which it was her chief pride and joy to be.

"Good morning, Eben," she said to the morose man whom her father employed to do what might be called the muscular work of the place, and whose jealous objection to Mr. Bell's admission of his daughter to the laboratory, three years before, Sylvia had completely overcome by her deft work and sunny ways. "Good morning, Eben. We are a little late, but the early rising mornings are only begun. I wish I knew a way to be here at work and out on the bay in my boat at the same time. I suppose I shall begin sailing before breakfast, get up by four o'clock. How are our patients in the tanks?"

Sylvia had been enveloping herself in her laboratory uniform, pulling on her protecting sleeves, tying the

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strings of her full-length pinafore with business-like jerks, Eben Tompkins watching the process with the engrossed attention which he daily gave it.

"Our patients, Miss Sylvia," he said, slowly, "are to the naked eye exactly as they was when you last investigated 'em. *In Statue Co.*, I think is correct, meanin' as I take it, remainin' fixed, like a statue, yet in their own company, all together, I believe it was once so explained to me; from the Latin, as I remember, but I'm ready to be set right."

"Not for the world, Eben," said Sylvia, with admirable gravity. "The usual translation is not nearly as picturesque, and it comes to much the same thing."

She went down the long room, with a slight glance at her father as she passed him, to make sure that he had not missed Eben's erudition, and bent over the farthest of the line of tanks that stood along the wall, on one side of the laboratory. With an absorbed intentness of expression she lifted starfish from the tanks, carefully measured each one, made a note of her measurements on a chart which she kept, recording each day's results of similar measurements. Its lines ran up into varying points like the record of a fever chart, or the profile of mountain peaks in an outline drawing of comparative geographical aspects of countries. The starfish experiments Sylvia enjoyed. It was interesting to watch the variation of their development under differing conditions of food and environment, conditions that were to lead to

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valuable conclusions as to what best contributed to the building up of cells, the basis of all animal tissues and life. The starfish were pleasant to handle, but Sylvia had to conquer repeatedly her repugnance to the holothurians which were her father's delight, being excellent mediums for his experiments.

"Squeeshy old things!" Sylvia said, inaudibly, as she often said, when she came to the fat, black, moist, and unlovely sea cucumbers in their tanks. "But you do your duty nobly contributing to science, and I will do my duty by you."

The holothurians betrayed neither gratitude nor pride as Sylvia proceeded to investigate them and record her results.

When her task of record-making was finished for that morning she went over to the long table that stood on the other side of the room from the tanks, and fell to colouring specimens for the microscope slides, with complete absorption in this part of her daily morning work.

The liquids which were to indicate and emphasize the variations in the cellular tissues she applied with deft fingers, working rapidly and accurately. She was a lovely picture in the clean, bare room, itself an incongruous yet effective setting for her youthful beauty, the strong white light of the room in no wise detracting from the perfection of her colouring and the texture of her oval cheek, and of her slender, graceful throat rising out of its ugly laboratory pinafore quite unharmed by its lack of adornment.

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"Whistles are blowing for the noon hour, assistant," said Mr. Bell after three and a half hours of intent work by father and daughter, carried on in absolute silence. Sylvia looked up to greet this little jesting formula of his with a smile.

"Just give me ten extra minutes, Chief," she begged. "I'll have this slide ready in eight more, I think."

She was as good as her word. In eight minutes by her father's watch, timing her, Sylvia finished the tinting of the specimen on which she was working, and she used her two minutes, left over from the ten for which she had asked, in straightening the work table. Then she arose, raised both arms over her head in a frank, refreshing, and thoroughly little-girlish stretch.

"My! Don't tell me that science broadens one; it's fearfully cramping!" she said. "Father, mine, how is the Experiment coming on?"

"Daughter, mine, it's coming on all right, as far as advance is concerned. Impossible to tell whether it will prove what I set out to prove or not; to tell yet, I mean," Mr. Bell replied, helping Sylvia with a refractory pinafore string midway between her shoulders.

"Oh, dear! Who ever first said patient waiters were no losers? They are; they lose—patience!" Sylvia laughed at herself. "I'm crazy to know the result."

"So long a laboratory assistant and still impatient of a laboratory's slow processes! When will you learn

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to be one of the patient waiters, Sylvia?" her father reproached her.

"Not at eighteen!" Sylvia cried. "I think people can't really be patient waiters till most of their patient waiting is behind them."

Mr. Bell opened the laboratory door and stepped aside, waiting with bent head for Sylvia to precede him.

"I will humbly follow a philosopher with such deep experience of life," he said.

"You foolish father! Even O'Malley would know that! I'll race you to the house; beat you to it! Good-bye, Eben, for to-day," Sylvia called back as she sprang after her father, who accepted her challenge as soon as it was spoken, and to whom she could afford to allow no start, young and long and strong of limb though she was.

They reached the foot of the steps warm and dishevelled and neck-and-neck, with O'Malley added to them, wildly cavorting and barking.

Cassandra Billings met them in the doorway, her face expressing that mixture of disapproval and admiration which one who never has played accords to the childish ones whom she loves but cannot understand.

"The Hapgoods called up to say they can go sailing with you this afternoon, Miss Sylvie. Something or other happened that lets 'em go, after all. I couldn't get what 'twas; that listenin' Mrs. Hinderson had her receiver down," Cassie said.

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Sylvia laughed, and patted her arm soothingly. It infuriated Cassie that one of their neighbours made "a shadowy third" at all the Bells' telephone talks. It only partly assuaged Cassie's feelings to change her name from Henderson to "Hinderson," as more appropriate to their half-defeated messages.

"Never mind, Cassie dear; the main thing is that Ruth and Lloyd will go. I was going to be a good girl, and call in fine raiment on that new girl! Now I can hurry into old duds and go sailing. Isn't that just like having a white china mug, lettered in gilt: 'To A Good Child' given you! I can't see why people say this is an unjust world! I'll be ready for lunch in five minutes, Cassie, so don't say what you were going to say!"

Sylvia rushed upstairs singing at the top of her voice one of the vigorous old sailor chanteys which her great friend, the retired seaman, Gabriel Gaby, had taught her.

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CHAPTER II

"What Is She?"

"NOW," announced Sylvia after lunch, her father having returned alone to the laboratory, "now, Cassie, my tried and true, I'm going to don my briny clothes."

"It's true that I'm tried right enough," said Cassandra with the look that one could have imagined worn by the banqueters under the sword of Damocles when—or if—another guest had jested beneath it. "I suppose there's no more use appealin' to you this time than any other time you went out sailin', but why under the canopy, Miss Sylvia Bell, you can't look *like* Miss Sylvia Bell I'd like to be told? You might dress plain, but not——"

"With this other kind of plainness, like the hippopotamus'? Don't you remember that story I told you about the dear old woman at the zoo looking at the hippopotamus, and saying: 'Ain't he plain?'? I love that story," Sylvia chuckled. "Cassie, dear, I've got to wear the disreputable things you hate, or I'd capsize! If I tried to look young-ladylike and picturesque I couldn't—well, I'd handle my boat in a young-ladylike manner, dis-

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grace my good old Gabriel Gaby-teacher, and go down to Davy Jones's locker, blushing! You don't want me to be a mortified ghost? Believe me, Cassie, there's something in it. They say the handsomer the sash the poorer the serve and return, in tennis, and I know that the shabbier the togs, the better the sailor. Don't mind, poor Cassie! Ruth and Lloyd are used to me, and to-morrow, at the party, I'll do you credit."

Sylvia went to her room, divested herself of her becoming morning gown, brushed and knotted tight back from her face her wealth of fine brown hair, that shone with a soft lustre, like a horse chestnut. She pulled down over her sleek head a khaki skirt to which salt water could do no harm, having already done its worst, and followed the skirt with a white middy blouse, spotless, but with its blue collar and cuffs faded by many washings.

All the while she kept up what she called a duet with herself, performed by simultaneously humming and whistling. The duet afforded Sylvia more pleasure than it would have given an audience, had there been one, but she got out of it a sort of empty-minded satisfaction which seemed not unlike the satisfaction a fly gets out of humming against a window pane.

Finally Sylvia pulled down over her hair a round soft felt hat, its brim turned down, its blueness whitened by long exposure, and this she did with a sigh of utter content, for no boy loves a shabby old

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soft felt better than Sylvia did; she never wore any other sort of hat, sailing. On the whole, Cassie was right; Sylvia had succeeded in transforming herself from a wondrously pretty and dainty girl into a figure that might have been taken for almost anything in the world but that. And yet a second glance at her as she turned to run downstairs would have proved that not all her indifference to appearance and choice of shabby clothes could totally eclipse a charm that was essentially Sylvia.

O'Malley found her good to look upon when she came out and whistled to him. Nothing Sylvia could wear, nothing she could do, not even had she unexpectedly abused him, could have made O'Malley's worship of her waver, but best of all he liked to see her in this uniform, for it foretold a sail, and O'Malley never got enough of sailing.

"Surest thing that ever was, O'Malley! We are going sailing!" Sylvia saluted her dog, bending down to him in recognition of his fidelity to the law that forbade him to jump up on her, however strong his emotions. "I should not have named you for the Irish Dragoon, but for a sailor. If I'd known how you'd turn out, my blessed pup, I'd have called you Barry, after the Revolutionary Irish Commodore! Too late, dog of the world! Doubly too late, for there are Ruth and Lloyd."

Sylvia crossed the lawn to meet her friends, who were taking a short cut toward her. Ruth Hapgood was a tiny girl with a sweet face, pretty in a delicate,

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womanly little way of her own; a face cut with the fineness of a shell cameo, tinted as beautifully as an arbutus. Her appearance bore out the facts of her character. Ruth was the sort of small person whom one might easily overlook in a crowd, but once seen, her sweet face grew upon one, and so did the qualities of her mind. Not a brilliant girl, but a thoroughly lovable one, the sort of girl spoken of by her friends, justly and emphatically, as "a *nice* girl."

Ruth's cousin Lloyd had been for two years giving his attention to growing. He had shot up into a stalwart boy, lacking his full six feet of height by less than half an inch and broadening as he grew tall, till he had attained splendid proportions and because of these proportions looked older than his years. He had an honest face, not handsome, but most attractive; it met the world truthfully, fearlessly; looked good-tempered, clean, and kind, yet had a set of jaw and line of lips that meant courage and determination.

In five minutes' talk with him one would have gauged all the essential facts of Lloyd Hapgood's make-up; that he had a good brain, but was not a genius; that he could be depended upon to any extent for sane judgments and efficient action. That he had an extraordinary capacity for dogged loyalty and truthfulness was the first thing about him that any one meeting him for the first time instinctively felt.

Sylvia was fonder of these two friends than of any

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of the young people of her neighbourhood. This would be the fourth summer and the third year in which Ruth and Lloyd had spent the summer at Paxton-on-the-Sea with their childless aunt, Mrs. Leveritt, who to an increasing extent, since the cousins' presence in her house had brought Sylvia also into it, had supplied to the motherless girl the mother-lack. Sylvia's face brightened as she saw the big boy and the tiny girl coming toward her. She waved her arm like a semaphore, though they were within hailing distance and she was shouting:

"Hal-lo-o, Big and Little One! So glad you could go, after all!"

"So are we," began Ruth. "We didn't seem really to be back here till we'd been out with you, and——"

"And we like to be out with you; it's tiresome to keep on so monotonously pleasant year in and year out," Lloyd interrupted his cousin.

"H'm! I wonder what you'd do if you really did fall out with me!" remarked Sylvia, apparently to O'Malley whom she patted as she spoke. "Lloyd Hapgood, you are the biggest thing, really! When you were coming, just now, you loomed. That's the one word for it; you loomed! Nothing makes me realize how old I—we all are getting as you do when you first get here and I haven't been seeing you. I can't bear to grow up, Lloyd!"

"Well, don't do it; you never will grow up as far as I have, though you're not a stunted plant yourself, Sylvia," said Lloyd, amused. "We're all showing

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the bleak effects of time—though I can't see that you feel 'em. In those unlovely but well-beloved togs, Tinker Bell, you look just exactly as you did that first summer when I nicknamed you Tink, and we hunted the counterfeiter in his lair."

"Yet I do feel the effect of time, and I'm not quite the same, and you are a freshman——"

Sylvia got no farther.

"Great Scott, Tink!" Lloyd interrupted her with a disgust partly feigned, but to a degree genuine. "What is the use? *Sophomore.* That's all the credit a fellow gets for hustling! Didn't I hustle to please you, too? I'd have been a fresh. this year if you hadn't begged me to get a move on and not waste time. Republics are never grateful—— Say, Tink, are you a republic, by the way? I think all men are equal in your eyes."

"I'm a limited monarchy, decidedly limited, but a monarchy. And as a monarchy is supposed to issue orders I command you to start down to the beach. But, honestly, Lloyd, I beg your pardon! It was pretty bad to call you a fresh. in your second year! I said fresh., but upon my honour I had sophomore in mind. And, as the Irish say, 'a slip of the tongue is no fault of the mind.' Don't the Irish say that, my Irish terrier?" Sylvia ended with an appeal to O'Malley accompanied by the hug with which all such appeals to her dog were punctuated. "Come along, crew; why do we waste time talking nonsense here?"

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"Where could we go to save time talking nonsense?" inquired Ruth, unexpectedly. "But come. It was only you and Lloyd delaying us, Sylvia; I haven't wasted a second talking nonsense."

"You couldn't, Ruthie—speck! You're just a pill-box of common sense," declared Sylvia, tucking the small girl under her arm and leading the way to the beach.

The path over the dunes which skirted the beach, rising steeply from it, was as delightful a walk now as it had been to Ruth and Lloyd when they had first seen it; as bordered with impressionistic colours in the wiry grass; as filled with the sense of freedom and faëry, as if one were walking on the edge of the sky, colour and light overhead, colour and fresh growth below, with a brisk breeze to unite earth and sky, which mingled their boundaries beyond.

The path descended precipitously to the beach, terminating where the duneside itself ended. At the foot the path delivered its travellers to the beach just above a tiny shack in which Gabriel Gaby, once a sailor, now merely a philosopher, lived in a solitude shared only by his cat, Mate.

Gabriel was, as usual, sunning himself in front of his residence; so was Mate. But Gabriel did not hear the approaching footsteps; Mate did. Catching the patter of a dog's feet she looked up, prepared to run. Then she recognized O'Malley, and having been taught by experience that Sylvia could be trusted to curb any anti-cat tendencies in her dog,

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Mate seated herself again in precisely her former position and resumed her occupation of watching a sand spider, occasionally stirring it up with delicate pats of her white paw when it lagged in its duty of entertaining her.

"Gabriel Gaby, awake from your slumbers," sang Sylvia, and the rotund little sailor jumped to his feet, his small, bluest of blue eyes gleaming with the pleasure that the sound and sight of Sylvia always brought to him.

"I was not asleep, Sylvie," he denied her musical allegation. "Don't you think a man can meditate better, Lloyd, when he closes his eyes an' shuts out the turmoil of the world, so to speak?"

Lloyd threw an eloquent glance over the deserted beach.

"Turmoil of the world? Yes, Gabriel, if I *could* shut it out, I'd want to, if I were going in for real deep, meditative meditation," he said.

Gabriel Gaby chuckled. "Well, call it a cat-nap, if you want to," he generously conceded. "It's meditatin', anyhow. I get a sight of wisdom when I'm neither awake nor asleep. I've got the notion that a man's mind's something like his soup kittle; you get the best strength outer it when 'tain't boilin' too hard, nor yet set off altogether; when it simmers right along, not showin' much turbulosity, so to speak, but extractin' the goodness—simmerin's the word." Gabriel glanced at Sylvia for approval.

"Sounds most convincingly true, Gabriel, but I'm

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not an authority," she said, promptly. "I always seem to be tremendously awake, or tremendously asleep."

"No doubt o' that, Sylvia, no sort o' doubt o' that!" Gabriel Gaby chuckled. "But you're not a retired seaman yet; you're still on your first voyage, an' on the first tack of it at that! Was you goin' sailin' now? But I see you've got your sea-goin' rig on."

"Yes. And I want my tiller. Did you get it done?" asked Sylvia.

"Well, I will! Clean forgot it. Yes, I fixed it. Wa'n't much wrong with it; loose, that's about all." Gabriel went into his house and came out with the tiller. "Here you are, Captain Sylvia, an' a good voyage an' safe port to you."

"Thank you, Gabriel. What should I ever do without you?" said Sylvia, but the question was an acknowledgment, not a query to be answered, for Sylvia was starting down the beach on a little run as she asked it; she never had outgrown her habit of running where another girl would walk.

The changes of time were marked by Lloyd's unfastening Sylvia's tender, in which they were to go out to the sailboat, and running it down the beach. When she had first known him, and had been but fifteen, Sylvia revelled in independence. Now, at eighteen, she had learned that young masculine creatures like to render service, to feel that a pretty girl depends upon them, so Sylvia stood back and let Lloyd serve her, though she was entirely able to

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do her own work, and it took considerable self-discipline to play the rôle of a dependent.

Lloyd also rowed out to the pretty catboat bowing and half turning in the small waves rippling around her, though Sylvia's fingers tingled to get hold of the oars.

"Nice boy to want to," she thought as she caught at the gunwale of her sailboat, welcoming the chance to do something, "but I'll get up early one of these mornings and get some old-time sails, with no boy to bother me!"

Sylvia drew an unbendable line of prohibition on the rest of the tasks. No one could handle her boat for her; she resolutely refused to give her over into other hands. She unfurled the sail—though Lloyd helped with this; hauled it up, her trained eye on the peak to insure no sagging; fitted the repaired tiller into its socket, and jammed it down hard, trying not to mind that Lloyd had made the tender fast to the mooring, and had cast off.

O'Malley went carefully, stepping along the deck to his post in the bow beside the mast. The sheet tautened, the boat lay over prettily, and they were off.

"Now, then!" breathed Sylvia, in supreme content, pulling her hat down farther over her head and stretching out her slender length of limb with a boyish movement of physical well-being.

"You do like it, don't you, Sylvia?" said Ruth, watching her smilingly.

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"Like it? *Like* sailing? Why, Ruth, that's no word for it! I *am* sailing. I mean it is part of me. I've never lived anywhere else but beside this blessed ocean and its inlets. My boat and I are one, like a centaur, don't you know?" Sylvia tried to express what words failed to express—words being extraneous while her sea-love was intrinsic.

"You stick to *The Walloping Window Blind*, don't you?" suggested Lloyd. "Thought you might set up a new craft this season."

"What for?" demanded Sylvia. "Gabriel Gaby —of course Father, but that is natural—even Gabriel talked a new boat to me. Why should I have one? *The Walloping Window Blind* is just as good as new. I had her when I was thirteen; five years, six summers, I've had her. That constitutes an old friendship. She's as pretty a model as you could find; she's been kept scraped and painted and overhauled; there's nothing wrong with her. She's the size I like, and—well, why should I throw over the good little cat?"

Sylvia patted the graceful little catboat, whose ridiculous name she had bestowed to conceal her inordinate pride in owning and sailing a boat when she was a little girl, and Ruth and Lloyd looked as though they found this loyalty worthy of the girl whom they both admired beyond all others.

"I hope you'll stick to all old friends, Captain Sylvia, always. What about that young medical meddler, Doctor Ritchie?" hinted Lloyd.

Sylvia was annoyed with her circulation; she felt

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it mount into her cheeks, and the old hat did not come down over her entire face!

"Precisely," she said, however.

"Eh? What do you mean by 'precisely'?" Lloyd demanded.

"I mean 'precisely'! What about him?" Sylvia repeated.

"He's hovering, Tink!" Lloyd suggested.

Sylvia shoved her shabby hat back with a sweep of her hand and faced him.

"Lloyd Hapgood, if you want to spoil a nice sail, dandy breeze and everything right, say so, and I'll put about," she said, disgustedly. "That's all nonsense, of course. No good my pretending not to know what you mean, but it's nonsense. Anyway, if a girl's eighteen I suppose she's got to set her teeth and stand it. Goodness knows I'm not looking for that sort of trouble! Doctor Ritchie—you all will call him doctor, but he has two more years before he gets his degree—is fine; I like him. But he isn't 'hovering'! Or if he is, it's only to fill up vacation time, and he knows I loathe silliness! I can talk lab. to him; he understands all about the experiments. It's starfish and sea cucumbers, messy old holothurians, as much as me!" Sylvia stopped to laugh, then, being an honest Sylvia, she added: "Anyway, Lloyd, I can't help it, and I wish you wouldn't be horrid and talk about it. I'd like to go along like Kim, and be a little friend to all the world for a long, long time yet."

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"Poor pretty Sylvia! They won't dare let a girl like you go along unmolested in your friendly way too long," said little Ruth.

"Ruth, you're such a morsel, yet you seem older than I do! You've grown up a lot this past year," said Sylvia, glad to turn the talk upon Ruth.

"Don't you think that's because I don't do anything but girlish things, and you have so many outlets, are so free and daring and out-of-doorsy that it keeps you boyishly young? And then there's all your laboratory interest," said Ruth.

"But I sew and do home—house—things!" protested Sylvia.

"The point is, not what you do, nor what you are, Sylvia," said Lloyd, doggedly. "The point is: Are you going to stick to old friends, like them best, as you stick to *The Walloping Window Blind?* I don't know how I, how Ruth and I, can stand it if you go and let these new ones get in on the ground floor, and we have to take what's left of you."

Sylvia jumped up to bring her boat around. She turned on Lloyd vigorously.

"You may as well wait till you see symptoms of it, Lloyd Hapgood," she said with asperity. "Such a nuisance! Here we're exactly the chums we always were and you fuss! When I do so want to have a good time, just the same old good time, nothing spoiling it! Why, we're almost like one family; you can't tell which are cousiner cousins, you and Ruth, or you and Ruth and I! And your blessed

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aunt is even more like my aunt than she is like yours, because I haven't any mother! And you talk about newcomers!"

"Well, you see——" began Lloyd, but stopped. He realized that it would never do to hint that this family affection had its drawbacks.

"Glad you stopped, Lloyd," said Sylvia. "Now I'm coming about on another tack. At the same time, leave that silly stuff, and we don't go back to it; do you see?"

"Aye, aye, Captain Sylvia," said Lloyd, so good naturedly and so humbly that Sylvia was appeased.

"Poor Lloyd!" she said, settling down on her seat beside the tiller and drawing in the sheet till the sail "peaked up," full to the top. "I'm a vixen!"

"Not a bit of it. You're Dear Lady Disdain, instead of Sylvia," Lloyd retorted.

"I cave!" cried Sylvia. "That was exceedingly well answered, and I'm proud to note your familiarity with Shakespeare."

The little *Walloping Window Blind* cut happily through the waves, speeding along at a great rate, and Sylvia revelled in her obedience to the helm, her swift motion.

She took the Hapgoods up into a little bay that made in from the sea and brought them home without a mishap, having covered many knots in three hours. The wind held, freshening as time went on, and Sylvia was in her element.

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"Pretty decent little craft; why should I change her?" Sylvia said as they came ashore.

They met Jack Jarvis strolling along the beach as they came in. He was attired in faultless summer array, and he stood stock still to stare aghast at Sylvia.

"Miss Bell! Is it really Miss Bell?" he asked, forgetting his manners as he surveyed the khaki, faded and whitened, and now wet with spray; the much-washed middy waist; the sea-stained hat.

Sylvia laughed and pulled off the offending hat, revealing her tight-drawn hair. "No, Mr. Jarvis; that is my incognito. I'm Captain Sylvia, of *The Walloping Window Blind*, at your service, and I *may* be promoted to a whaler! Good-bye, Ruth and Lloyd. See you at the dance—if they'll let me in!"

Sylvia ran off down the beach, whistling to O'Malley and laughing as she ran. "And Ruth looks as nice as a little trim dewdrop!" Sylvia thought, happily. "He'll see that second thoughts are not always best. How lucky she is to have hair that turns up at the ends, instead of getting horrid in salt dampness!"

Jack Jarvis turned to Ruth with a puzzled frown. "She struck me as a beauty the other day, and awfully high-bred, and all that. Why do her people allow her to go about like that?" he demanded.

"When you've known Sylvia Bell longer you'll discover that it isn't so easy to say what she is," Ruth answered with a flash. "She's the most truly

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high-bred of any girl I know; she's a princess! And at the same time—she's everything else!" Ruth waved her hands to encompass what she could not say.

"You *are* friends!" said young Jarvis. "Miss Bell sings your praises equally. I hope I'll know both of you better. But all the same it's a shame for such a pretty girl as Miss Bell to spoil herself. You must like her tremendously?"

"Like her! Like Sylvia Bell!" Ruth laughed. "I wonder why you put that as a question?"

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CHAPTER III

"—That All Our Swains Commend Her?"

AT DINNER that night the telephone rang and Sylvia sprang up to answer it. Her father heard her laughing over the message, and smiled in sympathy. "Evidently it was her own call," he thought and looked up inquiringly as Sylvia came back, still laughing.

"What was at the other end of the wire, Miss Bell?" he asked.

"A much-mortified and somewhat scared Lloyd was at the other end, Mr. Bell," replied Sylvia. "He had forgotten to ask to escort me to the dance to-night! How's that for gallantry? Not altogether flattering to your lovely daughter, is it, Mr. Bell? However, Lloyd was overcome by his remissness. And it isn't unflattering; we're such good friends he could forget. The other boys try to be so exceedingly well-mannered; Lloyd's restful."

"But he was too late, of course? You had promised to let someone else take you?" hinted Mr. Bell.

"No, I hadn't," Sylvia said, blushing a little under a suspicion of her father. "Doctor Ritchie asked

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me to go with him, but I said if I didn't join the Hapgoods I'd get there alone, and I wouldn't promise because I thought it likely I should go with them."

"I see. So Lloyd will take you and Ruth? Well, after he gets you there he won't be over-burdened," said Mr. Bell, with apparent innocence.

"No. It seems that Jack Jarvis asked Ruth to go with him ever so many days ago," Sylvia said, trying not to smile.

"Sylvia, take care! You will offend the eligible youths of your acquaintance if you play tricks like this," her father warned her, enjoying Sylvia's dawning bellehood, as she quite well knew he did.

She shut her eyes tight now, a new and pretty way she had fallen into when she wanted to hide their laughter.

"It won't hurt Gerald Ritchie, M. D.—stands for 'Most Doubtful' we girls say!—to be kindly and considerately snubbed. Besides, I can sooth his wounded feelings in a jiffy, if he has any! I must get ready now, Father-mine. I wish you were going! You can't imagine how much nicer you are than any youth—any *other* youth there, unless you go to make the comparison."

Sylvia had come around behind her father's chair, and he stretched up his hands, imprisoned hers and drew them around his neck, her cheek against his. "But I do know that if 'all our swains commend' Sylvia, as Shakespeare said, none of them can com-

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mend her as her father does," he said, the thrill in his voice testifying to his sincerity.

"You blessed scientist!" said Sylvia, kissing the tip of his ear, being at a disadvantage.

Upstairs in her own room she went about her preparations for the dance with the same impersonal interest that she had shown in getting ready to go sailing. Just as blithely as she had donned old clothing which hid her beauty, she assumed garments of exquisite materials and design which would enhance it. It was evident that Sylvia was intent solely upon having a good time, and that whatever contributed to that end was welcome, its effect upon her appearance being of no consequence.

O'Malley, that pampered Irishman, lay on Sylvia's couch watching her from under the wiry brows of his thatched head that lay down tight on his front paws. He knew quite well that this sort of dressing on his mistress's part betokened going where he might not follow. Sylvia surveyed her white silk stockings and slender white dancing pumps with a satisfaction that could not have been predicted from her sailing uniform.

"I tell you, O'Malley-dog, tan walking shoes are to be respected, but white dancing shoes are to be worshipped! I wonder why shoes are so much more attractive than hats, or gowns, or gloves? All girls love shoes, O'Malley, dear," she said. O'Malley wagged his tail cordially, but did not raise his head. He indulged his Sylvia's liking for dancing shoes, but

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why should he like that in which she danced away from him?

Sylvia's shining masses of dark hair were a problem to arrange. Her only consolation was that it did not require elaborate dressing.

She let her hair fall like a soft, dusky curtain over her white kimono, brushed it till it was tractable and silky, then braided it and coiled it across the back of her shapely head, letting it ripple back from her broad forehead, shading her temples in a way that was all her own.

She surveyed the result in the mirror critically.

"I wouldn't mind one, exactly right rose behind that ear, Mr. O'Malley, but I never thought of flowers! I'd hate to buy them to wear, for myself to fade," she said. Sylvia let her kimono slide to the floor and threw carefully over her hair a floating mass of white Georgette crêpe, which, settling into place, developed into a full skirt with hemstitched tucks and a waist that crossed and took her into its embrace in a surplice, outlining her throat in a long line of opening. There were wing-like sleeves that spread and flowed outward as she moved, showing the curves of her firm round young arms.

"Not so bad, is it, O'Malley?" Sylvia asked her confidant, blamelessly pleased with what her mirror told her. "She's made it beautifully. I'll send the other girls to her; she needs work. Now I'll call up my other Irish friend to finish me; Norah loves to see my fine feathers."

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Sylvia went to the head of the stairs at the rear of the hall and touched an electric button. A voice from below called up:

"Did you ring, Miss Sylvia?"

"Yes, Norah. I'm all ready but finishing. Won't you please come up and fasten hooks? Tell Cassie to come to see my new gown," Sylvia called back.

In a moment a brown-eyed, brown-haired Irish girl, with a sweet pale face that wore a look so anxious that it needed a second glance to see that she could be, at the most, not more than four years Sylvia's elder, dropped a small, shy curtsey in the doorway.

"Oh, Miss Sylvia, it's a vision you are in that white mist of a thing," cried Norah, wonder and admiration in her eyes. "You look like a Month of May procession, at home in Ireland, whin the young maidens march to the shrines. But they'd be wearin' veils and wreaths."

"Homesick, Norah?" asked Sylvia. "Hard to be here alone?"

"Oh, Miss, it's that and more! Will I fasten your gown, Miss Sylvia, and where will the places be needin' it?" said poor little Norah, checking a sob.

"Down the side, under this drapery, and the surplice where it crosses in the back, and then the girdle over that," Sylvia directed her. "I'm going to get you to tell me all about it, and I'm going to straighten it, whatever it is that troubles you. You're not to feel friendless in a strange land, Norah; you'll see!"

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This time Norah could not repress the sob.

"God bless you, Miss, for bein' unspoiled and gentle whin you've the whole world smilin' on ye," she heard the girl murmur. And after Norah had finished the hooks which Sylvia had considerately left for her to do, she saw her pale maid lift the edge of her white drapery and kiss it, thinking the action unseen.

"That's a dear way to start to have a good time, blessed and trusted," thought Sylvia, taking up her gloves and fan and leaving her coat for Norah to carry.

Cassie waited for her downstairs.

"You look very nice, Miss Sylvie," she said, her voice indifferent, but her eyes proud. "Most girls wear their skirts a bit shorter, but that looks nice. Hope you have a good time. Don't stay late. And remember whatever anybody else may do, you're Sylvia Bell, and *'noblessy obligay.'* I read that expression somewhere; it's French. It means if you're noble, you're under obligations to live up to it."

"Thank you, Cassie. I will try not to disgrace you," said Sylvia, meekly.

She slipped into the library where her father was reading, and revolved before him on her toes, challenging him by her silence to say that she was not satisfactory. Mr. Bell laid down his book and put his arms around her, gingerly, for fear of crushing her, yet most tenderly.

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"Dear heart, I hope the world will be kind to you," he whispered, kissing her. And Sylvia felt that a second time that night she had received a benediction.

"Lloyd's come for you," announced Cassie, calling from the hall.

Sylvia ran out to meet her escort. She found Lloyd impressive but self-conscious and embarrassed in evening clothes. He carried a long box, unmistakable in character.

"Flowers, Tink?" he said, thrusting the box toward her. "Didn't know whether you'd have 'em. Aunt Helen told me she thought this sort would be best."

"Why, Lloyd, I wanted some! I'll love them!" cried Sylvia, taking from the box long-stemmed, half-opened buds of creamy white, with golden hearts that gave out a delicious odour.

She pinned the roses in her belt, but one more perfect than all the others' perfection she fastened at the side of her heavy coils of hair, so that it lay against the darkness like a star.

"Is that right?" Sylvia asked with unintentional coquetry, turning to the silent boy.

"All right," said Lloyd, but he looked at Sylvia not at the rose.

"You never brought me flowers before, Lloyd; indeed I thank you," said Sylvia.

"No, I never did," said Lloyd.

For an instant they looked at each other, wonder-

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ing at a sense of a great change. Then Sylvia caught up her gloves and loose coat, which Lloyd did not offer to help her to put on.

"I don't need it, going. Come, Lloyd," Sylvia said, with a quick intaking of her breath.

The dance was given by Mrs. Clayton in honour of her only daughter Maida's nineteenth birthday.

The Claytons were part of the summer colony which was rapidly increasing in numbers along the beautiful dunes that bordered the ocean at Paxton. This was their second season in their stone house, a house called a "bungalow" for no reason whatever, unless because it could not be called a house in a city block. It was long, wide, and most imposing, its second story broken by many interpolations of sleeping porches and turrets, its ground floor flanked by porte-cochères and pergolas. Its dancing space surpassed any other in the neighbourhood, formed as it was by the combination of several rooms divided only by sliding doors.

Maida Clayton was a slender, dark-eyed girl, extremely vivacious, beside whom Ruth and Sylvia seemed to be—as indeed they were—mid-way out of childhood. Maida had acquired an air of experience that made her considerably more than her one actual year older than Sylvia Bell and her friends. Mothers felt vaguely that Maida's influence was not quite wholesome for their young folk, yet they never could verify the impression. The conservative old families

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of Paxton-on-the-Sea decided to attribute it to the Claytons' new riches. Maida was not in perfectly good taste: it was probably no more than that.

The two seasons that the Claytons had so far spent in Paxton had made considerable difference in the place. They dearly loved to entertain and to entertain lavishly; nowhere else could a dance be given with such reckless extravagance as at "High Tide," the Claytons' "bungalow."

Sylvia and Lloyd heard the quivering sweetness of the violins as soon as Lloyd stopped the engine of his roadster under the porte-cochère.

"I'll take her around to the garage myself," Lloyd told the competent person who was waiting to render this service to those who drove their own cars to the dance. Lloyd would never allow any one but himself to look after "*Gwendolen*," as he had christened his cherished car.

"I'll be right in, Sylvia," he added, coming around to help Sylvia get out. "Say, I forgot to engage 'most all of your dances! I want all of them, but please give me most of them, and don't let any one else fill up your card, if I happen to get held up in the garage, or anywhere."

Sylvia laughed. "Well, Lloyd Hapgood, of all the shrinking modesty! So shrunken you can't wear it at all! How do you know I wouldn't rather dance with other boys? I'm not going to promise dances now; it isn't fair. Goodness! That sounds as though my own modesty weren't too evi-

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dent! I don't mean that I think it matters, but I think it's fairer to begin at the beginning—of the dance."

"Matters all right! Well, I'll hurry. Say, Tink, sort of hang around upstairs, then, to let me start without a handicap," said Lloyd, jumping into his car and getting under way before the end of his short plea.

Sylvia ran gaily up the three broad steps of the entrance, enveloped in a shaft of opaline light from the great electric lantern just within the door.

The violins, with a harp accompanying, were playing a concert waltz, full of the longing pathos of that class of composition.

"Not dancing yet," thought Sylvia as she went up the stairs, glad not to miss one step of the pleasure which she enjoyed with all her music- and motion-loving nature.

It did not take her more than three minutes to make sure that *Gwendolen* had not disarranged her hair, nor her draperies, so, impatient as she was to get downstairs, it was good of her to dawdle in the dressing room in order to let Lloyd have the time for which he had asked to catch up with her.

A shy little creature who said that she knew no one, but whom, she said, Maida Clayton had met at one of the hotels and had invited to her dance, was loitering upstairs, dreading to go down, and Sylvia promptly took her under her wing.

"I'll introduce all the boys to you, and start you

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comfortably with the girls; it won't be hard to get acquainted, you'll find, if you dance well. Do you?" Sylvia asked with her boyish air of friendly protection.

"I ought to have told you," murmured the girl. "I said Miss Clayton met me at the Sea Girt. So she did, but—I'm a professional."

"Oh," said Sylvia, at a loss what else to say. Then she rallied. "You dance professionally? Then, of course, you'll be in demand. That won't make it harder, surely."

"You are very kind," said the girl. She looked pale and timid, not in the least as Sylvia would have expected a girl to look who followed this mysterious calling. She found it quite exciting to meet a professional dancer.

"Miss Clayton told me to come down and meet her guests, and dance like the rest of you, I mean as if I were a guest myself. But I have taught her a fancy dance and, later in the evening, we are to dance it together and I am to do some solo dancing."

"Great!" cried Sylvia, heartily. "What fun it will be! Maida Clayton always does something no one would have expected. We never had anything of this sort here; not in a private house. I never saw fancy dancing; not off the stage."

The little dancer looked up into Sylvia's clear blue eyes, which looked out on the world from under their dark lashes with fearless directness, crystal no more shadowless than they, the true mirror of a

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mind that disdained anything unworthy of stainless maidenhood.

"I hope you will like the dances," the girl said, and Sylvia felt a chill of apprehension.

"Why not? I love dancing. Shall we go down? Come down with me and we'll make our bow to Mrs. Clayton and Maida," Sylvia suggested, shaking off the discomfort.

"What a dear you are, Sylvia Bell, to look after my little genius!" Maida cried as she welcomed Sylvia. "This is Miss Hermione Elmsley, Miss Bell. She's a wonder, Sylvia. By and by we're going to show you something, she and I, that will make this little resort sit up and take notice! Introduce her, that's a dear. I've got to see to heaps of things. We're going to dance right away. If you'll start Miss Elmsley, she'll do the rest. Dancing with her is like getting wings when you'd no notion of it."

Sylvia turned away. Around her in an instant gathered a group of would-be partners, all eager to secure as many dances as she would give them. At the same time the girls beamed on her, few of them grudging her the inevitable triumph she received. Sylvia did not try to win admiration; she tried only to have a good time, and, having it, diffused it around her. No girl ever suspected that Sylvia was trying to get the best of her; she had no desire to pull out the plums for herself, Jack Horner-wise, so the girls wisely joined the boys in admiring her and following where she led. "What Sylvia Bell says, goes," they all

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agreed; her opinions carried an influence which she neither sought nor realized, because her standards were true, her sense of justice keen.

Somehow Lloyd was not the first to get hold of Sylvia's dance card. Gerald Ritchie, the young medical student, out-generalled him. He was five years older than Lloyd, six years older than Sylvia, a big, handsome, attractive person, never ill-natured, always carrying his point. Lloyd reluctantly admired him, though he felt particularly youthful and crude before him. For reasons that he never analyzed it made him heavy-hearted when he saw that Sylvia also admired Gerald Ritchie.

"Oh, Mr. Ritchie, wait!" Sylvia protested. "You're one of the big boys, grown up and desirable, I can't let you take more than four; it isn't fair!"

She laughed, but recaptured her card none the less, and the younger boys gratefully accepted and filled up with their names the spaces she had secured to them, each obediently taking only those which she allowed to him.

Gerald Ritchie had the first dance. The small orchestra was perfect and he was the best dancer in the place, Sylvia's dress was new and becoming, her shoes entranced her eyes every time she looked down at them; altogether, it was a blissful Sylvia that glided over the faultless floor on the arm of Gerald Ritchie. "Isn't it perfectly inexpressible to dance to such music?" Sylvia asked. "I love dancing! Oh, I *am* having such a good time!"

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The young man looked at her as if he were enjoying it, too.

"You dance like a dryad, Sylvia. The sea winds are in your veins and the rhythm of tree branches," he said, inspired to poetry. "I never saw any human being with such a capacity for enjoyment. Tell me, is there anything in the world that you don't like to do?"

"Darn stockings," said Sylvia, promptly. "I don't mind sewing, but I want something new to show for it when I'm through."

Gerald laughed. "All the same, I think it would be pretty hard to find anything active for brain, or hands, that wouldn't give you pleasure."

He left her at the end of the dance with a reluctance that everyone noted, except Sylvia, who went on the floor with Lloyd for the next dance with the same eager joy that Gerald had hoped was partly due to himself.

Never wearying, never flagging, Sylvia danced on and on, her eyes black with excitement, her cheeks glowing, every inch of her tall, slender frame palpitating with pleasure.

"Oh, I am grateful to you, Maida, for this lovely, lovely dance, the house, the floor, the fairy musicians!" Sylvia cried, pausing beside her hostess. "And your Miss Elmsley is having a good time; she hasn't missed one number."

Jack Jarvis took Sylvia out to the buffet supper.

"It's a perfect shame you live here in the winter,"

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he said. "You must let me show you to New York! You're made for the world."

"Am I? I feel to-night as though it were made for me, just for me," cried Sylvia, gaily. "It's such a dear, beautiful, happy world! Don't you think it's wonderful to have it 'so full of a number of things,' and to 'be as happy as kings'—with not one least little defect in it? To be grown up—almost—and still——" she hesitated.

"Innocently light-hearted, like a kid?" Jack said, looking at the radiant girl with something like veneration. "Indeed, it is, Miss Bell! I wonder—well, I wonder if you'd like the world if I could show it to you? It isn't all just like this!"

Sylvia's shining eyes met his trustingly.

"Don't you suppose one can keep it so, if they love nothing different?" she asked.

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CHAPTER IV

"Holy, Fair—"

SYLVIA and Jack Jarvis returned to the dancing to find a one-step half over and Reggie Clayton, who was to dance it with her, looking everywhere for Sylvia.

"I didn't want to miss a bit of it any more than you did; I don't want to miss a bar of this glorious music," Sylvia said, wondering why her partner's manifest sulkiness did not lift, and not seeing that she had attributed her regret to an unflattering cause.

There were but two more dances before a heavy silk portière which hung across the end of the dancing room was drawn aside. It revealed a stage, its background soft draperies hung in deep folds, after the approved method of preparing a stage for fancy dancing, while calcium lights, placed in a gallery of the drawing room, threw lovely colours over the stage in professional effects.

Maida's guests fell back and massed themselves in unconsciously beautiful groups, like great flower beds, to see what their hostess had provided for them.

Sylvia tried to get with Ruth, but failed. She

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"'Take me home, Lloyd!' Sylvia said, springing to her feet."

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found herself flanked by Gerald Ritchie and Lloyd, Jack Jarvis behind her. She was slightly separated from Sally Meade, a girl whom she liked, by a small table that had been pushed back to get it out of the way.

The little professional dancer, no longer pale, but necessarily made-up for her work, ran bare-footed out from between the deep folds of the background, her Greek draperies fluttering, and made profound obeisance to her audience, her sleek, filleted head almost touching the floor. And then she danced!

How she did dance! She seemed more like a winged creature than a human girl, skimming lightly over the floor, hardly touching it, her lithe, straight little figure bending in all directions as if it were superior to the restrictions of muscles.

The first dance was lovely, interpreting Mendelssohn's "Spring Song," beautifully played by two violins, a flute, and a harp.

Sylvia was in ecstasies.

"Oh, how lovely, lovely!" she cried, clapping breathlessly. "Can't you see the jonquils and hear the birds?"

"That little girl is good for an engagement on Broadway, all right," said Jack Jarvis, with the air of a man of the world.

The next dance was an Impromptu of Chopin's. It was beautiful, yet, for some reason that she could not define, Sylvia liked it less than the "Spring Song." Several solo dances followed, all illustrating Chopin,

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Debussy, and Russian composers. They were wonderful, but Sylvia grew quiet as she watched them. Something that she did not like she vaguely felt, and she began to feel sorry for so young a girl who earned her living by dancing for more fortunate girls.

At last Hermione Elmsley repeated the deep obeisance of her entrance and ran, light-footed as a nymph, into the folds of the rear draperies, her own full, diaphanous gauzes melting into them.

During a brief interlude the orchestra played a throbbing Slavic air, that penetrated through the murmur of enthusiastic comments on the dancing which surrounded Sylvia and irritated her nerves.

At last two figures stole out on the stage from among the draperies, a shaft of mauve light enfolding them. Sylvia caught her breath in a frightened little gasp that Gerald Ritchie and Lloyd heard and inwardly echoed.

One of the figures was Hermione in a gauze chiton that hung from one shoulder, clinging to her till she looked like a little blade of white, highly tempered steel. With her was Maida Clayton, in a short Grecian tunic, her hair covered with a wig crowned with a laurel wreath, to represent a Greek youth, presumably a victor in the Olympic games. And they danced something that represented, so the audience was told, a votive dance to Athene for victory, and an invocation.

It was wonderful dancing, marvellous grace and muscle control, but it was not Greek, nor represen-

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tative of Athene's worship, nor was the accompanying music in the least Greek.

Sylvia, inexperienced and exquisitely young, felt numb with pain, a pain too new to her for her then to recognize it as shock. She knew that Ruth must hate this strange, new dancing, too, and she wished that she were near her. The girls around her seemed to be carried beyond criticism by their admiration for the skill of the dancers. It was marvellous skill, but—it hurt! Oh, why had Maida danced like this? Why had she spoiled this perfect evening? Why, Sylvia thought, did she feel miserable, alone, as if her very self had been taken from her?

In a whirlwind of applause Maida and Hermione ran off the stage at last. They were getting an encore; they would return.

Sylvia would not look at Gerald Ritchie, though she felt his eyes gravely and kindly resting upon her. She turned to Lloyd and forced herself to look at him, a dumb look of tortured appeal of which she was not conscious.

Lloyd responded to it instantly, like her old brotherly chum.

"Want to get out of it, Tink? I'll take you," he said.

"Oh, yes! Take me home, Lloyd!" Sylvia said, springing to her feet, not realizing that she almost sobbed as she spoke, and that her rising then made her conspicuous.

"Go get on your coat, and I'll have the car

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around by the time you're down," Lloyd said. "I'd get Ruth, but she's in Jack Jarvis's care, and it's up to her to tell him if she wants to go."

Lloyd tucked Sylvia into the roadster with the utmost care when she appeared. He did not attempt to talk to her during the short drive home, for which she was grateful.

When they stopped at the Bell house Sylvia aroused from her thoughts. "I came away without saying good-night to Mrs. Clayton; of course Maida wasn't about. I hate to be rude, even——" Sylvia stopped.

"Even under provocation?" suggested Lloyd. "I've no doubt, Tink, you'll have all the chance to explain you want. You've witnessed to the truth that is in you, in one way, and I've no doubt you'll be called upon to testify in another way."

"I don't want to act as if I were better than——" Again Sylvia checked herself.

"You're dead right, Sylvia Bell, and you know it," said Lloyd, warmly. "It isn't setting yourself up; it's standing pat. People stand for a whole lot they'd better cut out. They say: 'What's the harm?' There is plenty of harm if it hits a girl like you, who isn't used to it, as hard as it hit you to-night. We were having a fine time; we weren't looking for trouble. What was the use of dragging in trash?"

"Lloyd, you are a comfort!" said Sylvia, consoled by this boyish way of understating, of dodging the strong terms of condemnation which Sylvia knew this

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manner of Lloyd's covered. "That's exactly what I feel. I was so happy to-night, so childishly happy; it was all so joyous and perfect! And suddenly they stole the joy away from us, and the childishness, too! I feel defrauded of my birthright."

"Dear old Tink, that's precisely what that sort of people do," said Lloyd, with profound feeling. "But thank the good Lord, they can't steal your birthright if you hang fast to it as you do! You have a right to be let alone; you're dead right. That show was beastly bad taste. Rather nice that whatever leaves a bad taste always is in bad taste, in the other sense! Now don't worry, Sylvia. It was all right to come away. Mark my words, there won't be any more of that in our crowd. What Sylvia Bell does sets the pace, you know. Say, Tink, I wish you'd let me tell you how glad a boy is to have girls like you to bank on."

"Good old Lloyd!" responded Sylvia, as another boy might have done. "You are a trump, and I'm no end grateful. You always did stand by when needed! Good-night."

By a compact of the evening before Mr. Bell and Sylvia came down early in the morning after the dance. The series of experiments upon which hung Mr. Bell's hope of establishing a theory, upon which he had worked intermittently for years, was far advanced toward completion in the laboratory. He and his assistant were to give long

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forenoons to it, rising early for that purpose, Sylvia no less interested in the result to come than her father was.

"Are you tired from your gaiety, dear? You look a little pale. I heard you come in last night considerably earlier than I had expected you. Did you enjoy the dance?" asked Mr. Bell, as quick now to note a change in his girl's face as he had been oblivious to her when she was younger.

"It's a great house to dance in, Father; so big when the rooms are thrown together, and the floors are like mirrors, and you never saw such an orchestra—I suppose I mean heard one. I surely enjoyed dancing there," Sylvia replied.

"But——?" suggested her father, missing something from her reply.

"Yes, I suppose so, sharp Father," Sylvia admitted. "Maida had a professional dancer to entertain us, and Maida danced with her—Greek, they called it."

"Well, my dear?" her father hinted, having waited a moment.

"Not very well, thank you," said Sylvia. "It disagreed with me. I suppose I looked miserable, for Lloyd asked if I wanted to go home, and I did. Came away and forgot to say good-night! We girls have our Hospital sewing meet this afternoon. I'll be unpopular, I suppose."

"Sylvia, dear child, it sounds serious!" Mr. Bell looked anxious.

"It is, Father! We never had anything like it

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here before. They'll say it wasn't sensible to mind it, but, Father, it was! And I did mind it! And I'll keep on minding. And we are a nice lot of happy girls, and if I can help it we aren't going to spoil that! So there!" Sylvia looked defiant.

"Your first encounter with another world than ours! I'm sorry, dear child: I'd gladly ward it off, but you've got to see and decide for yourself, Sylvia. I'm not afraid you'll decide wrong. If the girls discuss it with you, don't be severe, but don't strike your colours. Never do that, Sylvia—and make your colour white!" Mr. Bell laid an arm affectionately across his tall girl's shoulders as they went to the laboratory.

"When her shoulders are so nearly level with mine, I can't hedge her in like a baby," he was thinking.

A long morning of engrossing work, in which Sylvia could not help knowing that she was truly helpful to her father, went far toward healing her wounded sensitiveness. No young girl would want to seem to set herself up as a critic of others, nor would she enjoy feeling that her comrades were open to just criticism. Sylvia dreaded the afternoon, but she forgot it in the laboratory work that was marching triumphantly toward its climax.

Ruth came early, before any one else could get there. She ran to greet Sylvia with a vehement hug; to reach her neck she stood on tiptoe.

"You are a perfect darling, Sylvia!" Ruth cried.

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"Lloyd and I told Aunt Helen about it, and she says you are right, beautifully right. She says you needn't have come away as you did, but that she can, understand your running away, and that it was all right to do it, if you wanted to. And I saw Sally Meade, and she says she wishes she decided things the way you do; she says it takes her till it's too late to find out what she thinks about anything. But we stand by you, so if the girls—Maida—pitches into you, don't worry."

"I'm not worrying," Sylvia smiled down on her small champion. "But I don't want to try to look like a guidepost, if I *am* tall enough to be one."

The girls gathered rapidly in the big room upstairs which Sylvia had taken for post-war Red Cross work ever since they had organized a junior unit before the Armistice was signed.

Maida Clayton did not come. The other girls talked fast, but never alluded to the dance of the previous night, an omission that told eloquently of how much it was in their minds. Whispered conjectures as to whether or not Maida would come flew about when Sylvia seemed to be too busy to hear them.

At last, impressively late, Maida came.

Sylvia went to meet her. "Maida," she said, blushing furiously, "I want to apologize for not saying good-night to your mother last night. I could not get at you to speak to you, but I'm sorry I forgot to thank her. Will you tell her, please?"

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Maida tossed her head, her small dark eyes snapping with temper.

"Very nice of you to admit you could do wrong," she said. "We all supposed Sylvia Bell incapable of even a mistake. But of course when one is running away from contagion, one forgets trifles like manners."

"Why did she come here if she was going to be horrid?" Ruth murmured, wrathfully.

"To be horrid," said Sally Meade. "I hope Sylvia settles her!"

"Maida," said Sylvia, quietly, though her voice shook and her eyes flashed, "I am sorry you meet me like this. I cannot quarrel with you in my own house, at a Hospital sewing meeting, if I wanted to—and I don't want to. If you will take my message to your mother I'll be much obliged. I apologized only for forgetting her."

"If you weren't an inexperienced baby, in spite of your eighteen years, you'd know that was a clever dance, if I do say it, and that interpretative dancing is the latest," said Maida, contemptuously. "That was Greek, symbolic."

"Are all symbols alike, Maida? Doesn't it matter what a girl wears, how she wears it, how she dances?" Sylvia asked. "I did not like your dance; it was not even a pretty thing, and—— But there's no use discussing it! If you don't feel what I'd think any girl would feel about it, no one else can make you understand. It seems dreadful to pay

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another girl, no older than yourself, to dance like that."

"Good gracious! Listen to Miss Bell! Sylvia, that girl was precious glad of my check," cried Maida.

"I suppose so," said Sylvia, mournfully. "If only she had it for *not* dancing that dance, I mean! Oh, Maida, wouldn't you rather help that little thing out of all that?"

"You do get notions, Sylvia," said another girl, Una Garland, timidly, plainly trying to support Maida with an eye to the future. "Remember that novel you returned to me, and wouldn't read it? I never got over that. Why, that author is simply the most popular writer! He's great!"

Sylvia swung around with an impetuous movement.

"He's a beast!" she cried. "He writes abominable stuff, and the worst of it is that it does sell, and then the worst is that he could write well if he would, for he once did. He sells his talent, turns it into poison-gas manufacturing!"

"Well, if you are so afraid of poison, why don't you go into a convent and have done with it?" Maida said, disgustedly.

"Girls!" cried Sylvia, letting herself go, "am I goody-goody? Don't I love fun? And don't I have it, plenty of it: sail, swim, race, play games, dance, frolic like any boy? 'Tisn't fair to come to me as if I were a cantankerous old sour drop! But when it

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comes to what is *wrong* to do, or to like——" She waved her hands outward as if casting something from her.

"Sure you're a cut-up, Sylvia!" cried Sally Meade. "You're the most daring, liveliest girl in this place, and it's dandy to know you're straight and fine with it! You're dead right, and everyone of us knows it, no matter what she says."

"Oh, Sally!" protested Sylvia, embarrassed. "I only meant no one can call me goody-goody. If when we're older we have to come up against dreadful things, because it is our business to help out of them, somehow, why then we'd be wrong to be afraid to do it. But that isn't the same thing. Oh, I don't want to preach! It's dreadful! And it isn't in my line. But if you ask me, this is the way I feel."

"Well, Sylvia," persisted Una Garland, "why wouldn't you read that novel?"

"I have a white crêpe-de-chine blouse," said Sylvia, with apparent irrelevance; the girls stared as if they thought she was delirious. "I threw ink all over it, just to see how black stains would look on it."

"Oh, Sylvia! Oh, Sylvia, you *darling!*" cried Ruth in a rapture, instantly perceiving Sylvia's parable.

"Well, Sylvia Bell, you surely have bigger wheels in your head than I thought!" cried Maida, openly triumphing over Sylvia's folly.

"Do you mean——" began Sally Meade, feeling her way.

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"Yes, I mean!" laughed Sylvia. "I didn't throw ink over a white crêpe-de-chine blouse! That's a parable, my sisters! If I had, you'd have thought me silly, wouldn't you? Yet the blouse would be worth, probably, about seven dollars, and you might get the stains out with salts of lemon; at the worst, it wouldn't be a great loss. I don't think we can afford permanent spots on what never wears out."

"Put it to vote, a rising vote," cried little Ruth, delighted, seeing that her idol had won her cause. "All who agree with Sylvia Bell and pledge themselves to stand by her in this, please rise."

All the girls except Maida Clayton arose, though Una Garland, having risen, cast a frightened look at frowning Maida and sat down again.

"Oh, goodness, girls, *don't!*" cried Sylvia, crimson and uncomfortable.

"We came to make surgical bandages, and we've done some amputating," whispered Ruth to her, and, in spite of her discomfort, Sylvia had a warm sense of pleasure in having had the courage to stand by her guns.

She ran away to fetch a big box of candy with which she had provided herself for this meeting.

"Pretty white girl, Sylvia Bell is!" said Sally Meade. "I think she's a lot like Jeanne d'Arc, afraid of nothing except of disobeying her Voices."

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CHAPTER V

"—And Wise Is She"

"Miss Sylvia," said Cassandra when Sylvia returned late one afternoon of the following week from making calls in all the propriety of an eighteen-year-old Miss Bell, "there was a telephone call during your absence, long distance. Your aunt's coming."

"Oh, Cassie! When?" cried Sylvia, sitting down to take off her gloves, thus betraying how the message dismayed her.

"The day after to-morrow, on the 3:25 train. You no need to look so shocked, Miss Sylvia. Your Aunt Emily doesn't bother you nowadays as she used to. I think she thinks highly of you," observed Cassandra.

"She's very nice to me," admitted Sylvia. "I got better acquainted with her in the winter, visiting her. I'm ashamed to look sorry she's coming, ashamed to feel so, but I always remember that Aunt Emily's here when she is here, and it's nicer not to be restrained, Casabianca dear."

"I do wish you could restrain yourself from calling me that!" said Cassandra.

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"Oh, Cassie, I beg your pardon! I don't mean to do it," Sylvia said, contritely. "It's a flattering name, though. And fits. Think how you've stood by me ever since I was born! And no fires below your deck would make you budge. I think that's a fine tribute, to call you Casabianca! I'll try not to, though. Oh, Cassie, I've just thought of something! Do you suppose that getting 'cold feet' and quitting, dates back to the boy that stood on the burning deck? Because he couldn't have had cold feet, and he didn't quit?"

Cassandra showed no interest in Sylvia's speculative researches.

"Miss Sylvia," she said, "what do you expect me to do about Norah? She gets more 'n more tryin'. And with Miss Bell comin', I'll have hard work to put up with it."

Sylvia, the housekeeper, arose to the surface at this summons upon her.

"I meant to talk to Norah days before this," she said. "It has been crowded out. I'll get her up in my room after dinner and see what I can do with her. But you know, Cassie, there isn't the smallest ravelling of a desirable maid to be found now when the hotel and cottage season has begun! And as to Aunt Emily, why, in such things as Norah's mistakes I don't mind her one bit."

"Because I try to fill in the gaps Norah leaves," Cassandra said, severely, but Sylvia was on her way upstairs and did not turn back.

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That evening Sylvia found in her wardrobe a pretty gown to give Norah, and one in which she could make a few alterations for herself, enough to interest Norah in pinning into place the altered drapery.

"If pretty clothes won't win a girl to talk, I don't know how to do it," she thought, and called Norah up to her room.

Norah knelt and pinned assiduously the places Sylvia indicated, but her eyes did not smile when her lips politely smiled, and beyond the respectful: "No, miss," "Yes, miss," required by Sylvia's efforts to make her talk, pale young Norah was silent.

"Thank you, Norah! You have done that beautifully. You'd make a perfect maid. I'd like to have you to dress me, and mend me, and make for me—since I must dress! Norah, to be honest, I love old clothes best!" laughed Sylvia.

"Yes, miss. 'Tis wonderful, so it is, to see you so beautiful, and not carin' tuppence about adornin'," said Norah, this time smiling with eyes and lips both.

"Oh, I want to look nice when I have to, but freedom is a great thing. Now, Norah, here's a little dress that I think will be pretty for you to wear. Go into my dressing room and slip it on: don't you want to? And we'll look it over," suggested Sylvia.

To her consternation Norah's lips quivered, and her eyes brimmed with tears. "You're by far too good to me, Miss Sylvia," she said. "I needed no present for pinning your skirt. Sure, it's a privilege, so it is, to do for you."

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"Nonsense, Norah! I didn't give you the dress for what you did; I gave it because I wanted to! I know I'll like it on you," said Sylvia. "Norah-girl, won't you tell Miss Sylvia what is troubling you? She'd like so very much to try to cure it."

"Oh, God bless you, miss, for that, but how can you?" sobbed Norah. "Miss Sylvia, I don't suit here, and it's myself that knows it but too well. Cassandra doesn't want me, and I've been tryin' to get me courage up to sayin' I'd be leavin'."

"Cassandra is hard to please, Norah. She is kind and good, but she wants everything done precisely as she has always done it. I think you make mistakes because your mind is filled with some worry, and that if it were cleared up you'd be a fine little helper for Cassandra. Tell me all about it, Norah. I am a young girl, too," coaxed Sylvia, her voice irresistibly sweet.

Norah looked up and Norah looked down. "Oh, I can't!" she said, feeling herself on the point of yielding.

"Is it anything about your own people? Or a lover? Or not being well, Norah?" Sylvia urged, seeing victory almost hers.

"I'm never sick, miss, and a lover's a thing I've not a bit of," said Norah. "It's my young sister at home in Ireland."

"Have you a little sister over there? And is she alone?" asked Sylvia.

"Oh, that's it, miss, that's it!" cried Norah in a

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burst of confidence at last. "She is alone, bidin' the time when I'll be able to be sendin' for her to come out. She's but fifteen years, miss. And the woman that's keepin' her doesn't want her, and little Roseleen is that unhappy she do be writin' me to sind for her till I have me heart wrung by her."

"What would you do with her here, Norah? Maybe she is safer in Ireland till she is older," suggested Sylvia.

"No, miss, for there's a fine woman would take her in and look after her till she'd be old enough an' learned enough to go to service. It's no kin of ours, but a fine, good, pious woman, came from the same place we did, and that's near as good as kin, off so far. Roseleen would be all right here, entirely, and I was savin' up to bring her out——"

"Now don't say you lost the money, Norah!" cried Sylvia, as Norah hesitated.

"I lent it, miss, for one week only, to a pleasant, smart young man, who talked that nice, miss! But sorra a satisfaction can I get out of him since, an' it's three months—no, four months an' better!—since he got it! He had it at Candlemas. He laughs at me, tells me when I ask him for it not to love money like the Yankees, or I'll be spoiled," Norah ended ruefully. "He's not Irish, miss," she added, hastily defending her own race from suspicion. "He's one of those that might be anything, barrin' a Chinese."

"What have you for security?" asked Sylvia, feeling herself businesslike in asking.

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"Is it a paper you mean, miss?" asked Norah. "Not a sign of one!"

"Oh, Norah! What is this young man's name? Does he live here?" cried Sylvia.

"Yes, miss, he does. He's called Enos Coffin," Norah replied, hopeful of Sylvia's knowing him.

"Surely not Irish any more than Chinese! I don't know him," said Sylvia, shaking her head hard. "But I will know him! I'll see what can be done about getting back your money. In the meantime, Norah, listen to me: I'll lend you the money to send over to your Roseleen to pay her passage, and if I can make this too-winning Enos Coffin behave himself, you can return it at once. If not, some day! I'm not afraid to trust such a good little girl as you are."

"Oh, Miss Sylvia, Miss Sylvia!" Norah gasped, going down on her knees in a sobbing heap of gratitude, her face in her hands on the seat of Sylvia's willow chair. "Oh, Miss Sylvia, it's not the payin' back with money! But how could I ever pay you back for seein' and carin' that the heart was ate out of me with worryin', an' comin' quick to help me, like little Roseleen's guardian angel in a lovely human shape? For there's no other young girl in County Cork as pretty as little Roseleen, and I promised our mother I'd look after her till she'd not be needin' it. Miss Sylvia, I'll never repay you, but it's better havin' God owin' you for your kindness than the likes of me! I'll do me best to show you

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what it means to me. An', oh, Miss Sylvia dear, with the load off me heart, sure Cassandra will never find me mind cloudin' me eyes an' me ears whin she tells me instructions. No more burnt sausages, Miss Sylvia, thanks be to you, an' the angels that's guidin' you!"

Norah was too true an Irish girl not to laugh with Sylvia at this mingling of earth and heaven, and at the memory of Cassandra's wrath, sorry as Norah was for her wool-gathering.

Norah gathered up her new dress, which neither she nor Sylvia thought again of trying on her.

Sylvia heard her singing down the back stairs an air so truly Irish and minor that she rightly construed it to be a hymn of rejoicing springing out of her leaping Irish heart.

"Well, that was an hour well spent!" thought Sylvia, no less happy than her maid. "Oh, isn't it heavenly to be young! I may have nearly sixty years to live, and I can make people happy lots of times, in every one of them! How beautiful life is!"

Sylvia ran downstairs to join her father on the piazza. She welcomed a chance to steal an evening away from the good times going on among the young people in order to spend it swinging luxuriously in the hammock with O'Malley's head on her knees and her father close beside her, the tip of his cigar glowing in the dusk as they chatted. Much as Sylvia enjoyed all the delights of her age, she better loved her intimacy with her father.

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But Sylvia Bell's high spirits, daring fun, and pretty face were too much in demand for many of these evenings to be allowed to pass without interruption. So it was without surprise, though with a sigh, that Sylvia saw Gerald Ritchie coming in at the gate before she had been comfortably ensconced in the hammock a half hour.

"Ah, Sylvia! Glad I found you at home! Good evening, Mr. Bell," he said. "Pretty much all the rest of our generation is seeing the new films for the Hospital benefit to-night; how does it happen you're not, Sylvia?"

"I like an evening at home sometimes, and I didn't want to see the films. Don't you think we're all doing our little best for the new Hospital, and wouldn't you prescribe a domestic evening occasionally?" asked Sylvia.

"I would say it was wise," said the doctor-to-be. "We all know that you are helping your best; we don't call it a '*little* best,' though! Sylvia, I'm going over to North Paxton in the morning, to see a woman whom my mother talks of employing. It's a lovely drive along shore, you know. Will you go with me?"

"I'd like to go a great deal, Mr. Ritchie, but I can't. You see the morning is lab. time, and every day is important there now. Sorry!" said Sylvia, and looked so.

"Forgot all about the laboratory!" cried Gerald Ritchie, contritely. "I'll make it afternoon. Can you go then?"

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"Yes, thank you, glad to, but perhaps your mother is in a hurry about her errand?" suggested Sylvia.

"Oh, well, half a day can't matter. Shall it be about half-past two, Sylvia? My car isn't up to Lloyd's, but we'll get there. And you can wait outside while I talk to the Coffin lady," said Gerald.

"Coffin!" echoed Sylvia, swinging herself back with the force with which she brought her feet to the floor.

"Why this emotion?" asked Gerald Ritchie. "Do you know the Coffins?"

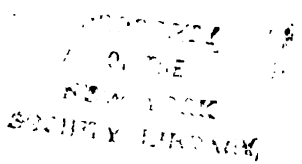
"No, and that's why this emotion," retorted Sylvia. "I want to. Isn't it curious how if you hear of a thing for the first time, and it interests you, you always hear of it soon again? I never knew there were Coffins in Paxton, not till to-night, and now you invite me to drive to see them! And I want badly to see them, one of them. Is the woman young and is her husband a young man named Enos?"

"No, the woman is middle-aged, and is getting the middle over on the wrong side, at that. Her son is Enos; will that do?" asked Gerald.

"Perfectly well," Sylvia agreed. "Indeed I'm doubly glad to go with you; I didn't know how to find him."

"Explanations are in order, Sylvia. Your father is consumed with curiosity," hinted Mr. Bell.

"Smoulder just a little while, Father mine! I'd like to try my luck before I tell any one about it," begged Sylvia.



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"The Sphinx was a lady, Ritchie; they all love riddles," sighed Mr. Bell.

"The Sphinx was not a perfect lady, Father; you must admit that her hands weren't like these." Sylvia held up her shapely tanned hands to prove it. "Now I *am* a perfect lady, and I will solve my own riddle later! The Sphinx wouldn't so much as allow hers guessed. Mine is a nicer riddle, leads to more, too. Though it has something to do with someone going on all fours; not walking erect, apparently."

"If you won't enlighten me, cruel girl, at least don't deepen my mental darkness," Mr. Bell implored, trying to speak piteously.

"I like Gerald Ritchie, Sylvia. He has character of the right sort, a nice mind, and quiet, good breeding. I should imagine he would make a valuable physician," Mr. Bell said, standing with his hand on Sylvia's shoulder watching away the guest to whom they had just said good-night.

"I like him, too, Fatherums. I catch myself treating him respectfully, which is queer, for he isn't so fearfully much older than I am and he's a Paxton product! He's that kind, though. Yes, I like him. But I like an evening alone with you! However, that will be a lovely drive, and I do want to find that Coffin—drive a nail in him!" Sylvia ended with a laugh.

Gerald Ritchie was punctual to the hour appointed for the drive. His car was a small touring car, and

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Sylvia, fresh and pretty in a blue pongee with white collar and cuffs and a knowing little close hat, chose to sit in the front with her host. "I don't think it churns one up half as much, and, anyway, I do hate to be the sole survivor in a tonneau," she declared swinging herself up without taking Gerald's proffered help.

"Coquetry, or consideration would make you let me help you, Sylvia Bell," remarked Gerald, following her and pushing over his gears.

"I've no desire to be a coquette, Mr. Ritchie," said Sylvia, ignoring the implication that she was inconsiderate.

"Why *Mr. Ritchie*, Sylvia?" asked Gerald. "Am I so patriarchal?"

"I know; the rest call you 'Doctor,' but I thought it wasn't the thing to do until you were a doctor," said Sylvia. And possibly she was not quite free from coquetry in this reply that dodged his meaning which she well knew.

"Won't you say 'Gerald'? You used to when I was a big boy and you were a small girl. Remember the day you stayed too long on the rocks and the tide came up, and caught you unawares, like the mother of the little girl who had a little curl? And I came along and got you off triumphantly and carried you to the beach pick-a-back? You must have been ten, or a little less, for I was sixteen then." Gerald looked as though he enjoyed the reminiscence.

"Surely I remember!" cried Sylvia. "I was

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scared to bits. But afterward I so much enjoyed having been scared that I went out on the rocks and sat there till high tide, all alone, just to see if I should drown. I didn't! But I am willing to admit that I was the wettest kiddie outside 'The Water Babies.' I used to do the craziest things, playing alone as I did. I wonder I lived to grow up, though dear old Cass was almost as good as an accident policy! She took such care of me! But she couldn't cover all my wanderings."

The young medical student laughed, and let out his car.

"You like speeding up to the limit. How about it, Sylvia? Shall I be the same big boy I used to be; 'Gerald,' not 'Mr. Ritchie'?" he persisted.

"Of course, if you like," said Sylvia, carelessly. "It's because you've been away so much, college and medical college, that you come back a formal stranger. It's not sensible. I'm having a fine drive, Gerald. I like this car. Is it much farther?"

"Not much; a mile. If that means you'd like a longer drive we'll take one after we've made our call," suggested Gerald, looking pleased.

They swung into a street of small houses, before one of which they stopped. "Will you come in, or shall I send your victim out to you?" asked Gerald, holding the door pending Sylvia's answer.

"Send him out, please. I have to talk to him alone; it's a most serious matter." Sylvia laughed, but she looked anxious.

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In a moment a heavy young man, light-haired, light-eyed, with a shambling gait, came out of the house and lunged toward her. There was something vaguely familiar about him, a shadowy half recollection, as of someone seen in a dream.

"Are you Enos Coffin?" Sylvia asked.

"Yes, Miss Bell. Pleased to see you again and lookin' so well. Got that dog yet? What was it, now, you called him? Some name, 'twas, but I can't——Oh, yes! Mahoney, or Moriarty, wa'n't it?" the surprising Enos asked.

"O'Malley? Where did you ever see O'Malley, or hear his name? Oh, now I know! You took us, my dog and me, home in your cart once, ever so long ago, when O'Malley had cut himself chasing a cat over a cold frame!" Sylvia suddenly recalled the youth and a brief acquaintance with him. "I told you to come back to let me give you grapes, when they were ripe, but you did not come."

"No, Miss Bell," said the young man, "far be it from me to have did so. I laughed over that dog's name, and the way you held his head up in your lap, a-settin' flat on my cart bottom, with his leg tied up with fancy embroider*ar*ies, which I thought then and ever after you'd tored off'n your own self, till I'm safe to say I'd of had to pay not less'n thirty-five cents to have laughed so hard at movies. I was more'n satisfied with what I made out of it, if you was."

"I was perfectly satisfied," replied Sylvia, gravely,

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not pointing out that her satisfaction did not flow from the same source. "You were kind, and helped me out once, so I hope that you will make it easy for me to say what is hard for me to say to you now. Do you know a nice Irish girl, Norah Leary?"

Enos's face changed. "I may say that I do," he admitted.

"She is in my employ," said Sylvia, gently. "I came to ask you when you expected to repay the money which you borrowed of her? You know, Mr. Coffin, she earns her money with her own hands, and she needs it. When can she have it?"

"Well, it's like this," began Enos, visibly embarrassed. "That money isn't anywheres now, as money. It's where I can't get it."

"It would be possible to get the same amount in other money, wouldn't it? Norah does not care about having back the same bills. You say it does not exist now as money?" Sylvia tried not to laugh at this view of finances.

Enos shook his head till it hardly seemed safe. "It's now a ring," he said.

"Oh," cried Sylvia, and could not check a rippling laugh that ran away from her. "Do you mean that you borrowed from a poor girl to buy a ring?" she asked, sobering down to her task.

"You couldn't, not noways, Miss Bell, you couldn't, buy a cheap ring for the lady you was lookin' forward to givin' so much more as your whole self, now could you? And my Allimetta's that

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partic'lar you'd never think how she'd critter-size a ring that fell short. So, as I'd fell short myself about along then, I borrowed from that lady what works for you, you say, and I don't see my way to settlin' for it soon. I'm buyin' on installments a phonograph talkin' machine, and records, lottin' on havin' a happy home, if my lady friend stands pat, so to speak."

Sylvia choked; it was an instant before she dared to attempt to take up her argument. Then she said:

"Do you think your Allimetta—didn't you say Allimetta?—would care to have you borrow from a girl to buy her a ring? I think not, if she is honourable."

Enos's inexpressive face took on a distinct look of alarm.

"Great cats, Miss Bell, you won't let it leak out, will you? Not the way you think, she'd mind, but, oh, my salted codfish, ain't she the jealous one! She's that jealous of me you couldn't believe! And I don't never look at any other girl, to admire her, not since I first asked Allimetta to leave me call around."

Sylvia was suffering. Her throat ached from suppressed laughter. The image of an Allimetta jealously watchful of this flabby Enos was hard to regard unmoved. But she saw her opening, and took it.

"I will not go to see your Allimetta, provided that

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you repay to Norah the money you borrowed. If you do not, I must see that she understands that in reality it was Norah Leary, not you, who bought the ring she wears," Sylvia said, sternly.

"I haven't got it now, that's honest, Miss Bell. But I'll try to raise it. Say, it's a lulu ring! Awful lot of small, small diamonds put right in a mask, so to speak. So's to make a dinner ring—but Allimetta wears it most after supper. It shines great! It's what the man called a marked-keys ring; search me why! Say, Miss Bell, keep it a secret between us, and I'll do my best for Miss Leary. I'll get extra work; I can."

"Very well. Let her hear from you a week from to-day as to what you are going to do for her," said Sylvia, like a second Portia, but feeling that Enos was more unfortunate than wicked, and that his Allimetta was not worthy of his simple, albeit misapplied, devotion to her.

"Hurry away, Gerald," Sylvia said under her breath, as Gerald jumped into his car. "I've but a few moments to live unless you can get me to where I can laugh!"

As they drove off, Enos, at the gate watching them with a woebegone face, seemed to rebuke Sylvia's sense of humour.

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CHAPTER VI

"The Heaven Such Grace Did Lend Her"

OUT of sight of the melancholy Enos draped over his low gate, when the car had turned the corner, Sylvia fell back with her face against the leathern cushion, and laughed and laughed.

Gerald laughed with her from the contagion of her merriment.

"I enjoy the joke, Sylvia, still I should like to know what it is,' he remarked.

"Allimetta is dreadfully jealous of Enos Coffin," sighed Sylvia, wiping her eyes and straightening her demoralized hat. "Enos has borrowed money of our pretty Irish Norah in order to buy his Allimetta a marked-keys ring—he said so, Gerald, truly! A *marked-keys* ring! Exceedingly glittering and resplendent! And Norah might continue to supply Allimetta's glory if Allimetta were not jealous. But I hope and believe that fear of my telling Allimetta its source will arouse Enos to an effort to pay for his ladye faire's ring! Isn't that a pretty plot for a comedy?"

Gerald Ritchie stared at Sylvia, then he laughed, throwing back his head and giving himself up to it.

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Sylvia said that what she liked best about Gerald Ritchie was the thorough way he laughed.

"It's a peach, Sylvia! But so are you!" Gerald said, admiringly. "What a girl you are for sailing right in!"

"Comes from being Captain Sylvia, and having a boat of my own from my earliest days?" suggested Sylvia. "But that doesn't sound nice, Gerald; I don't, I surely do *not* like meddlesome spinsters!"

"Spinsters of eighteen aren't so worse," observed Gerald. "You know perfectly well it isn't meddling, but a knightly instinct to rescue the friendless! I'm shocked to find you insincerely fishing, Miss Bell! Can a girl be a knight errant?"

"You seem to have packed a good deal into that one sentence, Doctor Ritchie-to-be!" retorted Sylvia. "And I think a girl can be a knight errant, at least in spirit."

"Brave, loyal, tender, and pure. That's about the knightly ideal, isn't it? Sure she can be, and sometimes she is," agreed Gerald, unexpectedly. Then, as if he felt that his eyes were applying his words too strongly to the "brave, loyal, and pure" girl at his side, he added hastily:

"Got to do the mater's errand. It's to drive up to North Beach for a fresh lobster for supper. Do you mind?"

"Mind! Not a bit. I'd gladly drive to Maine in this breeze, if I hadn't obligations of my own," cried Sylvia. "Aunt Emily Bell is coming to-night to

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visit us, and I must be home in time to make myself fit properly to receive her."

"Seems to me I remember your aunt when I was that big boy and you were that small girl we spoke of, and that all of us stood in dread—well, we'll say awe—of her!" hinted Gerald.

"Indeed we did! She's grown ever so much nicer; at least she thinks I have, which comes to the same thing for me, yet I can't get over the old habit of feeling squelched when she's coming." Sylvia sighed involuntarily.

"When two people are as happy as you and your father are, or the mater and I, it's not much fun having any one come in to make a new note in the harmony. And I suppose it's worse yet when you don't live harmoniously and someone comes to catch you at it," added Gerald with his jolly laugh.

They found that the lobster fishermen had not been long ashore with their haul. The lobsters destined for the hotels near by were boiling; it was necessary to wait till they were done to get one for Mrs. Ritchie.

Sylvia and Gerald strolled along the beach, whiling away this time of waiting, and Sylvia recurred to what Gerald had said as they were driving over.

"Father and I are perfectly happy together, Gerald," she said. "Sometimes I wonder if it is selfish, wrong, to be so much so."

"You, Sylvia, asking yourself morbid questions!" cried Gerald. "They're not in your line, and it's

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surely morbid to doubt its being right to be happy—in your particularly right way at that! Sure it's right, beautifully right, and you know it."

Sylvia smiled at Gerald's emphasis.

"Oh, well, I don't mean that I don't know how lovely it is for a father and a daughter to be such chums as Mr. and Miss Bell are, but it does make me selfish. It wouldn't trouble me greatly if I had no other friend on earth than my splendid father! And I don't care about any visitor staying more than a week—to be honest! That must be selfish; people ought to want to share their good things."

"Aunt Emily?" hinted Gerald, suggestively. "Is she the cause of your conscience awakening?"

Sylvia laughed. "I s'pect!" she admitted.

"What's wrong with her?" asked Gerald.

"Nothing in all this world. She's the most perfect perfect-lady I ever saw! She truly is a nice woman, and a good one; she does everything precisely as it should be done; helps the poor; does a lot of charity work; contributes to no end of worthy causes; abhors dishonour as much as she does untidiness; always would speak the truth though the sky fell; never has a smudge on her gloves, nor one point of her collar the least speck higher than the other! She used to die over me, my shabby tramp clothes, and my unladylike pursuits—sailing my boat and running wild, as she called it! I used to dread her visits, because I did hate like everything to be the text and the congregation, both, to one long, every-day ser-

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mon! Aunt Emily was sure I'd never learn to sew, or to cook, or to do a single thing I ought to do! But now that I'm housekeeper, and make my simpler gowns, she is quite approving me. It must be a load off her mind! She's almost respectful to me, and really affectionate, in her way. Poor Aunt Emily! So it's mere selfishness that makes me dread her visit; she's fine to me! But she never will like O'Malley!" Sylvia ended her long statement of the case with a sigh more sincere than her carefully favourable construction of her aunt.

Gerald threw back his head with the same ringing laugh.

"Now we tap the milk in the cocoanut!" he cried. "There the truth leaked out! You and your Aunt Emily are not what the Italians call *simpatica.*"

"I like dogs," admitted Sylvia. "I suppose that stands for something! Dogs are not formal, and they certainly are democratic. Aunt Emily is most formal, and if she didn't feel afraid to lose her soul by denying the Declaration of Independence she'd never admit anybody was equal to a Bell. She does admit it, because she knows the whole duty of an American, but she doesn't believe it!"

Again Gerald laughed. "You won't grow into one of the clever ladies who say smart things, will you, Miss Bell?" he suggested.

Before Sylvia could prophesy her own development, Gerald continued: "My mother and I are cronies, speaking of happy families. She likes you a

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lot, Sylvia. She said the other day that she wanted you to come to dine with us."

"That's kind of her," said Sylvia, absent-mindedly. "Do you think the lobster is ready?"

"We can go back and see," said Gerald, hurt by her indifference to his mother's intentions, which involved, and were meant to supplement, his own.

"Mother is not well, Sylvia. She hesitates about asking you to visit her, thinks you'd find her dull."

"Why, I like your mother! She's as nice as she can be, and is always interesting. Of course she couldn't be dull if she tried," cried Sylvia, heartily, arousing to an appeal to her pity, as she always did.

"I'll tell Mother you said that; thank you, Sylvia," said Gerald, gratefully. "And you'll come? I want you to come; you know that, don't you?"

"Of course. 'Ever the best of friends, aren't us?' Like Pip and Joe Gargery," laughed Sylvia, looking up at him with the frank friendliness that is the surest discouragement of sentiment.

Perhaps Sylvia was aware of this and put up the barrier intentionally; the least conceited of girls usually is aware of the approach of sentiment. Then she reverted to her own affairs, partly because of the look in Gerald's eyes, partly because they really were supremely interesting to her.

"I can't speak of laboratory doings, Gerald, to any one. There'd be no use in speaking of them where it could do no harm, because no one would know what I was talking about. And if they did

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understand there'd be a risk of secrets leaking out. But there's no harm in telling you that Father thinks he's proved a theory which he's held for a long time, a valuable discovery, a triumph!"

Gerald looked admiringly into the girl's eyes, shining with joyful pride. "I'm safe, Captain Sylvia," he said. "I might be able to understand, but I surely would not betray the secret. Is it near publication?"

"Yes, near," said Sylvia, nodding hard. "The specimens are developing beautifully in the tanks, and most of the slides are done. Gerald, you can't imagine what it feels like to help in a thing like that!"

"Can't I? I think I can. You're a lucky girl, Sylvia. You've always been interested in something worth while. Even when you were a kiddy it was sailing, rowing, gardening, reading; you never have had vacancies like other growing girls. It's great for you, but your friends feel that it rather excludes them. It sets you free in spirit; nothing gets hold of you to tie you down, but the very thing that turns you into a kind of young Diana shuts out people like a high wall. Every corner of your mind is rented, furnished!" Gerald laughed as he spoke, but there was no mistaking the sincerity of his complaint.

"Nonsense-nonsensical!" cried Sylvia, impatiently. "I like people fully as well as they like me. Anyway, I never advertised vacant apartments for lodgers! There's your lobster, Gerald! I can't distinguish his features, but they're taking a lot out

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of the pot, and he's among them. I believe I'll take one home to Cassie, if there are two out of a situation. Aunt Emily would like lobster salad for lunch to-morrow I'm sure—because I would."

"Mornin', Captain Sylvia," said one of the lobster fishermen as Sylvia came up. He was a droll person, with heavy bent shoulders and a funny tight sort of face, covered with a wrinkled skin, pickled in brine, out of which his light blue eyes twinkled like bubbles on the surface of the pickle.

"Morning, Mr. Benjy Lobster," returned Sylvia, using the name which in her babyhood she had bestowed upon him. "We, Mr. Ritchie and I, want luscious lobsters. Have you any to spare?"

"Well, Sylvia, *any* we have, but a lot we have not! The Surf House is goin' to have big doin's to-night and it engaged most of our haul. I couldn't let you have more'n, say, a dozen an' a half lobsters to save me, not if I was to regard my given word," said "Mr. Benjy Lobster" without a smile, but twinkling at Sylvia.

She twinkled back at him, also unsmiling. "We'll struggle along with two apiece, if they are a respectable size," she said.

"I clearly an' distinctly remember you came one mornin' after a lot of unwholesome sweet stuff to take out in your boat; this was to Peter Barnes's store you come, an' me an' the rest of us was settin' there; about the time you captured them counterfeiters, more'r less single-handed, this was. An' I

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told you I'd got a lobster so little he'd of made a watch charm for you, an' I'd chucked him back in the water an' told him to grow big enough to make you a salad. Well, he carried out my instructions, an' this mornin' he come back into my pot. 'How'll I do now for Captain Sylvie's salad?' he inquired, all green an' side-steppin'. 'Fine!' says I. 'Come in out of the wet.' He's a-grown up into a credit to his country, Sylvie, an', with another medjum-sized one, will make you a salad worth it."

"Can you give me a pair, also; even if they aren't lobsters you've known from their youth?" suggested Gerald, enjoying the fisherman as much as Sylvia did, to whom "Mr. Benjy Lobster's" dialogues with his haul had been an unspeakable delight from her earliest days.

"I've got a pair named Romeo an' Julyet. Romeo he told me not for anything to let him get parted from Julyet, salad, or *ally Nooburg*. I guess you'd like that sort of a lobster," said Mr. Benjy, solemnly, but chuckling inwardly as he watched the colour rush to Gerald's hair.

At last the adolescent lobster and his lesser companion and Gerald's "Romeo and Juliet" were wrapped in a coarse, greenish-brown paper and stowed away in the car, and Gerald sped away at a higher speed than he would have chosen, because Sylvia was nervously afraid of being late to prepare for her Aunt Emily's arrival.

"Had a fine drive and accomplished a lot. Thanks,

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Gerald, ever so much!" Sylvia said, giving her hand to Gerald at the car door.

"I wish I could always have you with me when I drive, Sylvia!" Gerald burst forth, not as if he meant to say it and immediately looking red and frightened.

Wise young Sylvia laughed carelessly, though she blushed as she said: "Life isn't all beer and skittles, they say! Nor all sailing and motoring, either. I'm a busy old lady, Gerald, what with my housekeeping, my sewing, and my laboratory! Why, it seems to me I hardly read a thing lately! But this drive was fine. Good-bye; thanks over again!"

Sylvia ran up the walk and into the house and almost into her Aunt Emily, coming out of the library door to meet her.

"Oh, Aunt Emily!" Sylvia cried, stopping short, aghast at this apparition. "I am so sorry not to have been here to receive you! I surely thought that I'd get back sooner, but I also thought that you'd not get here till the last train."

"I made a prodigious effort to take the early one, Sylvia," replied Miss Bell, kissing her niece with an alteration in her manner that Sylvia instantly felt. "I was impatient to get here. How well you are looking, and how pretty, child!"

If the ceiling had fallen Sylvia could not have been more amazed. Aunt Emily did not say gracious things, and she wholly disapproved of compliments.

"Why, Auntie!" she exclaimed. "I'm glad if

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you think that, but I'm afraid I look most untidy. I cannot keep my hair in order like other people when I drive or sail. And there's a strong breeze along the beach. We went after lobsters; Gerald Ritchie took me."

"So Cassandra told me. He's an excellent young man, I fancy. Will you come into the library at once, Sylvia? I want to talk to you. I—I need you, Sylvia; your advice, your help, your sustaining youthful strength." Miss Bell's voice shook and she turned without another word, preceding Sylvia into the library.

"What can it be!" thought Sylvia, following her aunt and considerably startled. "It must be something awful to change Aunt Emily like this! Fancy her needing me! Appealing to *me* for help, for advice!"

Miss Bell went back into the library, dropping her small belongings, her handkerchief, a glove, her pocketbook, as she went. Sylvia, picking them up and retaining them till her aunt was seated, wondered, as she so often had before, at this peculiar helplessness in her self-reliant aunt. Now it seemed, from what she had just said, that Miss Bell was about to reveal in another way that she was not equal to carrying her burdens alone.

Miss Bell dropped with a long sigh into an enveloping chair. Sylvia drew close to her a low chair and gently divested her aunt of her hat and handbag. Then she took the low chair herself, and leaned forward, her face on her hand.

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"You look tired, Aunt Emily. Is anything wrong?" she asked, softly. "Won't you let me have tea for you and a biscuit?"

Miss Bell caught at Sylvia as she started to rise.

"Not between meals! Not even tea. I don't approve of eating between meals," she said as if Sylvia had proposed something shocking. "Sit down, child. I'm sure I don't know why I'm going to consult a girl of your age, unless it is that I have no other kindred and your father would not understand. After all, a woman is a woman, and at eighteen a girl is almost a woman."

"I'll do my best, Aunt Emily," said Sylvia, wondering more and more, but adjusting herself in body and mind to the rôle of confidante.

"Well, Sylvia, to begin with, when I was not much older than you there was someone—I knew a young man very well—I—in a word, I expected to marry," said Miss Bell.

Her Aunt Emily hesitating, embarrassed, and over such a revelation, was to Sylvia so amazing that she could hardly credit her eyes and ears.

"Oh, Aunt Emily! Really? Were you engaged?" she cried.

"No, I had not pledged my word. He had several times asked me to marry him, but I was reluctant. I think girls were more coy then, don't you? Than now, I mean?" said Miss Bell. "I had fully made up my mind. I knew that I should be miserable to live without him, but I clung to my

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individuality, if I may so express it. Yet of course he knew that I should at last say 'yes', since if I had not meant to I should have ended it at once. The girls of my generation were more reserved than yours."

"Hard on the man!" said Sylvia, cheerfully. "I can't imagine liking any one well enough to marry him and leave Father, but if I liked him well enough I can't imagine not saying so and marrying him!"

"You are not at all the sort of girl I was!" sighed Miss Bell. "It was one of those situations for which there is no exact word. An understanding comes nearest to fitting it. I was not engaged, but we both understood that one day I should marry this man. And then, my dear, there came along the other girl!"

"Aunt Emily! How dramatic! How awful!" Sylvia hastily amended her comment, realizing that she was betraying her enjoyment of a situation familiar in novels.

"Dramatic it may have been. Awful, outrageous, it certainly was," said Miss Bell. "Sylvia, she was a girl in the worst possible taste. Her colouring, her manners, her voice, her costumes were all flamboyant, loud—really, my dear, I'm afraid I must say vulgar. One doesn't like to condemn strongly a person who—— But she *was* common, quite common, Sylvia. It is true. I was indignant, humiliated, that I, Emily Bell, could appear in the belittling

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position of a rival to a person not in any way of my own class. Sylvia, it was galling. He was attracted from the first."

"Very likely she said funny things and made things lively. Girls like that often are amusing, and boys like to be amused," said young Sylvia, indiscreetly, remembering how Miss Bell had always disapproved her own romping, and might have been a dull girl.

"Amused! I assure you, my dear, that the girl was impossible, quite impossible!" said Miss Bell, rigid with protest against Sylvia's explanation. "I made him clearly understand that I would not for an instant submit to being put upon even an apparent comparative equality with this—this girl! He must choose. Sylvia, he chose. Perhaps, more correctly speaking, he drifted in the direction easiest to follow. He came to see me, but I knew that he went the evening before to call on her. He came to see me again, but I was not at home to him. I never received him again. He married that dreadful, common person. He could not have been happy. Sylvia, I have not been happy; I have been a lonely woman, and I sometimes have blamed myself for not having more patiently tried to show him his fatal error."

"Poor Aunt Emily! I had no idea you'd had trouble like this! I never would have guessed you'd ever thought of marrying! He almost had to go to the other house, didn't he, when you shut your door

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to him?" said Sylvia, whose directness and inexperience made her unable to cope with this confidence.

"Ah, my dear, that is precisely it!" cried Miss Bell, nevertheless finding this suggestion a balm to her pride. "I drove him to desperation; I drove him from me. It was because my ideal was too high to tolerate the least 'little rift within the lute', but I surely 'made the music mute'."

"Tennyson's rather milk-and-watery for such a dreadful thing as a big love gone wrong, isn't he?" cried boyish Sylvia. "Well, Aunt Emily, you can't help it now. What's the use of bothering over it? I'm sorry you had such a tumble when you were young, but look what a nice life you've had, after all, and you do enjoy being Miss Bell. You'd have lost that if you'd been Mrs. Whatever-it-was. It was all long ago, wasn't it?"

"It doesn't seem so to me, because one always continues to live in the atmosphere of her most vital experience," said Miss Bell, "but it was when your father was four years old, and I was nearly twenty. I distinctly recall that I was making his first kilts the day that I saw this young man for the last time. Little boys of that period wore plaid kilts as a sort of vestibule to manly habiliments, donned between their white skirts and first trousers, and I was making Clement's little Stuart plaid kilt when I last saw my lover."

Sylvia looked helpless at this statement. It

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seemed to relegate the whole affair into the period of Mary Stuart's love affairs to picture her father getting a Stuart plaid kilt, at the age of four, when it all happened.

"But you hinted that there must be some point in my telling you this story," Miss Bell went on. "Yes, my dear, there is. Though I never saw these people again I have known of their history. The woman died some eight years ago, leaving her husband with a little girl less than a month old. Other children had died; this was the only living one. Now the child's father also is dead."

Miss Bell paused. Sylvia saw her aunt's lips twitch, her face twist convulsively. Her Aunt Emily, severe, self-contained, proud Miss Bell, wanted to weep for the man whom she had loved all these years, who had preferred another to her. Sylvia put out her hand and patted Aunt Emily's, understanding at last, though dimly, something of the vitality of love and the pang of loneliness and loss. Miss Bell accepted her silent sympathy gratefully. She clasped the long, strong, sun-browned hand and held it as if it sustained her.

"Sylvia," she resumed, "that child is friendless, and, Sylvia, her father named her Emily! I wonder—I came to ask you if you thought that it is my duty to take her, bring her up? It would be a risk; she might be like her mother."

"Aunt Emily, I do think you should take her!" cried Sylvia, unhesitatingly. "As to being like her

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mother, people are quite unlike their nearest relatives. See how unlike father and me you are! And I've heard—Gerald Ritchie was saying just the other day—that it's a fact that girls nearly always are like their father's side, not the mother's. Wouldn't it be great for you to have a little daughter eight years old! And she would be your daughter, really, if things hadn't gone wrong! Do take her, Aunt Emily, do!"

"Sylvia!" gasped Miss Bell, aghast at this rapid decision and its manner of making. "It's too serious a matter to decide off-hand."

"Not a bit of it!" declared Sylvia. "Here you are a lonely woman. Here is a lonely child, named for you, having a claim upon you. And here's a chance to make reparation if you weren't patient enough, didn't coax the little girl's father, when you were a girl, but just laid down a regular ultimatum—like the Allies'!—and the unladylike girl got him. So why in the world shouldn't you hurry to make everything nice all around? What in the world is there to wait for?"

"Sylvia, my small fortune would be yours. If I take this child I shall undoubtedly feel compelled to provide for her, instead. Her father never got on. It is only just that I should tell you that you may lose by this step. I will never put aside the claims of my nearest of kin. If you object to this adoption you are within your rights to do so, and I will not deprive you, nor run the chance of ultimately de-

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priving you, without your full knowledge and consent."

"You dear old thing," cried Sylvia, kissing her aunt to the surprise of them both, for caresses were not common between this pair of relatives. "If that's all, take twins!"

She jumped up, laughing and stretching out her arms above her shining brown head that surmounted her slender five feet seven of height.

"What do you suppose I want of your money, dear Aunt Emily?" she cried. "Haven't I enough? I have my home and plenty, and Father will never squander it, nor I. And if I got quite poor, couldn't I earn a noble livelihood as a pilot in this harbour? Why, Aunt Emily, I don't care *that* for money! I could be happy on the least little income with my health, my books, my catboat, my O'Malley, and, maybe, with my fatherums! I don't care *that* for money, truly!"

Sylvia snapped her fingers high above her head and swung around in a few steps of a dance measure.

"How perfectly lovely it is that you'll take the little girl! Shall you call her Emily Bell, or let her keep her own name? If she remembers her father—and at eight she must—she'd rather keep his name. It would be nicer for her to call you auntie, anyway. I'm awfully pleased, delighted! Aunt Emily, you will let her romp, won't you? Get dirty, tear around? Please let me put in a word for her, and beg you to

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let her have dandy, dirty, free times—even overalls, if she wants them!"

"Was I such a dragon to you, Sylvia?" asked Miss Bell, wiping away tears which she would not let fall, and half laughing.

"Pretty bad, Aunt Emily. You never approved me, and I was not half so black as you painted me, neither my morals nor my little grubby hands," cried Sylvia. "Thanks for trusting me and consulting me now, Aunt Emily. I consider that a promotion. I hear my father and your brother coming in from the lab. like one man, in perfect unanimity. Shall we go meet him?" cried Sylvia, turning joyously, as she always did, toward the steps which she heard in the hall.

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CHAPTER VII

"That She Might Admired Be"

I WASN'T looking for you, Emily, for at least two months. You never can be trolled from the mountains till everyone else considers the seashore unseasonable—I'm glad you came when it is at its best, but how did you happen to descend from the White Mountain peaks?" asked Mr. Bell when he and his much older sister were established on the piazza after tea, Sylvia in the piazza couch at the end, with O'Malley slowly insinuating himself closer, intending ultimately to get up beside her.

"I didn't descend. I did not ascend this year, Clement," replied Miss Bell. "I've been at home. This is because I've expected what has happened. Do you remember Hubert Anstruther?" asked Miss Bell.

"Why, I recall the name," said Mr. Bell, slowly, considering. "I don't remember its bearer. Seems to me—weren't you engaged to him? I have an idea——"

"I never was engaged to him!" Miss Bell interrupted him with a snap, while Sylvia wondered that even her father, who so delicately handled his laboratory specimens, could be so masculinely clumsy.

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"He is dead. His wife died eight years ago, and the baby she left is now alone. Her name is Emily. I came to consult Sylvia about taking her to bring up. You, too, of course, but chiefly Sylvia. A woman, however young, has more sense than a man in these things. Sylvia approves warmly. But if this child stayed with me as my adopted daughter I should leave her what I have. This would deprive Sylvia. She is supremely indifferent to money now, but she has no experience of its value. I want you to consider this aspect of it for her, Clement. I have no intention, nor desire, to be unjust to Sylvia. I admire her exceedingly and am very fond of her, fonder of her than of any one in the world, in fact." Miss Bell made her statements without the least display of feeling behind them, nevertheless Sylvia was utterly amazed by this last one. She knew that her aunt's "conversation was yea and nay," and that if she said that she was very fond of Sylvia, very fond she was, and also that she admired her when she said she did, but it struck Sylvia as unbelievable, so long had she been oppressed as she grew up by Miss Emily Bell's disapproval of her boat-sailing, old-clothes wearing, untrammelled manner of life.

"Aunt Emily, it's mighty nice of you to say that," cried Sylvia, upsetting at once O'Malley's plans and his body by springing to her feet and shaking out her thin white skirt. "I hear one of the boys coming, and I'll take him around to the other side of the

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piazza, or maybe he wants me to go somewhere. You and Father can settle the finances; as far as I'm concerned they are settled."

"How could you hear a boy coming? Where is he?" demanded Miss Bell.

"He hasn't come around the corner yet, but I heard him on the next street." Sylvia laughed delightedly over her mystery, and fled without explaining it. But as she went she heard her father say: "The Paxton boys have fallen into the way of announcing themselves by whistling: 'Who is Sylvia?' as they approach. I often wish some of them had a truer ear; it's rather beyond some of them to compass that air. Sylvia doesn't need your money, Emily. I'm not ambitious for wealth for my girl. She'll have enough to keep up our present manner of life, which to my mind is precisely the right manner; plenty even for pretty clothes, pleasure, books, and moderate travel; not enough to be burdensome, nor tempt to excess in any way. Take your little girl, by all means, without hesitating on account of my big girl."

Sylvia had been standing at the head of the steps, awaiting her guest whom she had heard, as her father had explained, whistling the air of Shakespeare's praise of another Sylvia before he turned into the street upon the corner of which the Bell place stood.

To her surprise the visitor proved to be Jack Jarvis, the new-comer to Paxton; she had expected to see Lloyd, or Gerald Ritchie, and perhaps it was

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a slight disappointment that made her say, a trifle sharply:

"Well, Mr. Jarvis, I thought it would be one of our own crowd. Where did you learn—or did you whistle that song by chance? At least you do whistle it correctly."

"Where did I learn that the 'swains who commend her' whistled 'Who is Sylvia?' when they were coming here?" said Jack Jarvis, coming up the steps. "Why, I came here once with Lloyd Hapgood, and he whistled it. Then I came with Gerald Ritchie, and *he* whistled it, and I caught on. It's not so hard, once you know what that song's about. You'd be surprised to find some of the New Yorkers not so bad at catching on to harder clues than that! Say, Miss Bell, won't you take me in, among the other young folks? Call me Jack, you know? Mr. Jarvis sounds so ridiculous, especially in a nice seashore place like this. And I'd no end like to call you Sylvia!"

"I don't want to," said Sylvia, frankly. "I'm beginning to feel old enough to make distinctions; I'm eighteen, you see. I met you at my birthday party when I became eighteen, so it seems fitting that you should be a boundary mark!"

Then seeing that Jack Jarvis's pleasant young face really took on a hurt expression, and being a girl who was friendly to all things, biped and quadruped, and who was also almost devoid of coquetry, or the least desire of conquest, Sylvia re-

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lented. "Maybe we'll get first-name chummy after a little while, but just wait a minute! You're Ruth Hapgood's friend, or you know her better than me, and any one that Ruth approves, or who has sense enough to appreciate Ruth, I'll take for a friend, too." Sylvia hoped that this announcement would delicately convey to Jack Jarvis that he would be admitted to her friendship only by admiring Ruth more than he did herself.

Jack laughed a little; Sylvia doubted her skill as she recognized perception of her purpose in Jack's laugh. Perhaps New Yorkers were better at "catching on" than she would have had them.

"Great girl, Miss Sylvia Bell!" Jack Jarvis said with a comical look. "Loads of fun to be a shuttlecock or a tennis ball! Ruth drives over the net herself, but balls don't always drop on the last stroke into the court you're hitting them up for! I wish you'd come to New York this winter. Ruth, too, of course!" Jack added, hastily, with a laugh. "My sister's young, married, has an apartment right in the middle of things, and takes 'em all in—box at opera, all the shows, in fact, the whole show! She'd be crazy to get you down, and maybe I wouldn't like to trot you around! Not half bad, little old New York, when you know how to get at it. I'll have Peggy—Peg o' My Heart, I call her—come here when she's back, before she goes to the Berkshires; she's in London, went in May, comes back about the first of September, unless she takes

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in Scotland till October. Anyway, October's not too late. Peg's a peach, beauty, too, if she is my sister, and I know you'd get on, and the way she's got all the good times going right on her chatelaine's a sight! Would you come down, Syl—Miss Bell?"

"Mercy me!" cried Sylvia. "Must I refuse, or accept on the spot an invitation from someone who doesn't know I'm alive to be invited? And your poor sister now sleeping in blissful ignorance over in London! I'm sure I can't say what I'd do if everything that never has happened did happen. I suppose you acquired this pace crossing New York streets? Father is entertaining his sister on the moon end, the east end of the piazza. Sorry, but won't you come and sit on the west end? No moon and no sea on that side, but there's a breeze there."

"Sure's death and the taxes, I forgot I was sent on an errand!" exclaimed Jack. "Sally Meade—she doesn't mind first names—sent me after you. Most of your crowd is there and she, they, want you. Some of the other fellows were coming to fetch you, but I wanted to, and that peacherino of a Ruth Hapgood engineered it so I got the contract. Will you come?"

"Yes, I think Aunt Emily won't mind; she wants to see Father alone, I'm sure," said Sylvia. "Aunt Emily," she added, going back to the east end of the piazza, "Sally Meade sent for me. Do you mind if I go around to her house for a while? I won't stay late."

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"Not at all," said Aunt Emily, graciously. "I shall stay here a few days. Are you properly dressed? Is it a dance?"

"Nothing special on, is there, Mr. Jarvis?" asked Sylvia, turning back to the messenger. "Aunt Emily, this is Mr. Jarvis, spending the summer here. My aunt, Miss Bell, Mr. Jarvis. Please look after him while I do something to my hair; it's probably all over the lot; it usually is!"

Sylvia ran away, she rarely walked, and came back with her masses of shining brown hair crowning her head in the individual way that she always dressed it, partly because its quantity allowed little choice, partly because she was Sylvia, who imparted to everything about her that effect of its being peculiar to herself.

It chanced that the thin white frock which she wore that evening, simple though it was, suited her to perfection. Tall and slender, brown of tint, yet flecklessly fair; her dark blue eyes alight with happiness and sweetness under their long, dark lashes; her delicate, straight nose the least bit tilted upward above her full curving lips; her handsome head borne up on her slender neck with a pretty poise of dignity to offset the sensitive gentleness of her lips, Sylvia Bell was a picture as she stood in the doorway, the lovelier that she did not seem in the least aware of her effect.

"I'm ready," she announced. "Sorry to be so long, but I found I couldn't make myself tidy with

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merely adjusting hairpins, had to take the whole thing down! But you didn't deliver your message, Mr. Jarvis, or we'd have been there by now. I took these shoes; you never can tell! Only at Sally's we're more likely to dance than anywhere I know. Mrs. Meade plays for dancing better than any one in this world, and she's always willing."

"Give me your shoes." Jack Jarvis put out his hand for Sylvia's bag of wide blue ribbon, brocaded with crushed pink roses, and stuck it in his pocket. Then he laid over her shoulders her long cape of an indescribable shade of American Beauty red broadcloth; his face, invisible to Sylvia as he stood behind her, was clearly seen by her father and aunt.

"Good-bye, Parent and Guardian!" said Sylvia, kissing them both good-night, without a thought for her perturbed escort. "Be quite good while I'm gone, and don't lock up when you go to bed. Though I truly will not stay late. O'Malley, dog of the world, you may come, if it's any satisfaction to lie on Sally's piazza waiting for me, and I know it is, old Devotion. Sally never minds."

Sylvia ran down the steps, O'Malley rejoicingly rushing after her. She waved the corner of her cape at him for him to catch, paying slight attention to Jack who came after the girl and the dog in a sort of daze of delight.

"That young man is falling in love with Sylvia; who is he?" said Aunt Emily, the instant they were beyond hearing.

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"He is Jack Jarvis; his father is fabulously wealthy; they are prominent in many important matters in New York, and he seems a nice boy. Heaven help him, if he falls in love with Sylvia! I wouldn't dare conjecture what she would do to him. He rather fancied little Ruth when he first came, and Sylvia will have him drawn and quartered if he attempts to veer to her," laughed Mr. Bell in high delight over his loyal and high-spirited girl..

"But a brilliant marriage, wouldn't it be, Clement?" Miss Bell suggested.

"Oh, yes, it would be," said Mr. Bell, indifferently. "If it were right in other, more important ways. Sylvia will never marry for ambition—if she marries. It certainly is far from her thoughts now."

Sally Meade hailed Sylvia with acclaim. "Thought you'd never get here and had murdered Jackie into the bargain!" she declared, almost dragging Sylvia into the house after her.

Sally was not only not pretty; she was downright plain, a swarthily dark girl, with square features and chin, or at least her forehead and the end of her nose were square, and her thick midnight dark hair heightened the effect by the way she arranged it. Sally was mannish, whereas Sylvia was boyish; Sally lacked all the delicate girlish ways which, in Sylvia, were always cropping out to offset her boyishness. Sally was like a daughter of Vulcan; Sylvia was like Diana, free of restraints, but always maidenly.

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Sylvia heartily liked Sally Meade; she truly said of her that "you always knew where to find Sally; that she struck right out from the shoulder, and sent her balls straight to centre field; no fouls were batted backward by Sally."

"You're needed, Sylvia, my duck," declared Sally as she forcibly towed Sylvia into the house. "Maida Clayton got the crowd together over at High Tide, and they wanted to dance. There wasn't any one to play, so they decamped for my willing mother and our house. Maida has the little Elmsley girl along. I don't know, but I suspect she means to get back at you, and you notice you didn't get a telephone call from High Tide to come over; some of the rest did! Sylvia, Maida Clayton has it in for you since you decamped from that beast of a dance and she'll never rest till she pays you back."

"Mercy, I didn't know there was a feud on!" cried Sylvia, stopping short. "I wouldn't have come for a scrap; I thought it was just our usual sort of time. Maybe I'd better go back, Sally; no one has seen me!"

"You'll not go back not one inch, and there's no scrap on, nor will be, though it's sort of feudy on Maida's side. What do you suppose I'd be doing with a scrap in my own house? Not for your little Sally-ratus! Especially against you, Captain Sylvia, head of this Paxton force!" declared Sally, warmly. "If you want to know how Maida Clayton

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would like to crush you, I'll tell you: By swiping Gerald Ritchie, but that young medicine man's got his eye out for cases!"

"Oh, Sally Meade, how silly!" Sylvia cried, shrugging back her shoulders to let Sally catch her cape from them. "It's so ridiculous to talk as if—— I tell you, Sally Meade, I simply will not grow up!"

"Five feet seven, eighteen her last birthday, everybody dippy over her! Where are the snows of yesterday?" chuckled Sally, admiringly.

"Oh, for goodness' sake!" Sylvia protested. "What's Maida's game?"

"Penochle—knuckle under," said Sally.

"Sally, you're getting feeble-minded! Let's go in," said Sylvia, giving up Sally's case as hopeless.

In spite of her own deficiency of good looks, Sally Meade felt for Sylvia a sort of adoration; she exulted in her beauty, her talents, her character. Now she did what few girls would, or could, have done, but Sally sought nothing for herself which other girls seek; she had made up her mind that they were not for her, and if she minded it no one ever knew it. Yet Sally won her own sort of admiration, well worth having. She held it lightly as most of us hold what we have, denied something that seems to us better worth the having. Now Sally deliberately placed her rather dumpy figure and her plain face beside Sylvia's graceful height and beauty, and came into the room with her as a foil to set

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off the girl whom she worshipped. Sylvia guessed nothing of this, but came forward smiling, not realizing that she looked, in her floating, spotless white, like a nymph who had become a part of her forest streams and early morning dewy skies.

"Hallo, girls and boys!" Sylvia cried. "I nearly missed it, but Sally sent for me. My aunt, Miss Bell, came to-day and I was kept in; I suppose I'd have stayed in, if Sally hadn't sent Mr. Jarvis with a witch hazel wand to find me."

"Quite sure it would have been a loss and that everybody wanted her," said Maida Clayton, vindictively, into the ear of Hermione Elmsley, the little dancer.

"Everybody does want her! She is a great, great loss when she stays away!" said Hermione, to Maida's boundless amazement. "Feel the difference in this room since she came into it, so tall, so beautiful, so, so—— How shall I say it? So white and shining!"

"For the love of Pete, Miss Hermione Elmsley! I fail to see it," said Maida.

"I won't dance, Miss Clayton," persisted Hermione. "I will not do that dance."

"For fear Captain Sylvia Bell, the belle of Paxton and the Bell Wether of its idiotic back-numbers of girls and boys, won't appreciate it!" cried Maida, so angry that she forgot caution.

"For fear Miss Bell may not like it," said Hermione, firmly. "I don't think it's in good taste

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myself; I don't like to do it, ever, but you know I need money. I'd die if I saw Sylvia Bell look as she did that night at your house! I will take off my costume, and come down and do anything else I can to please you; not for pay." Hermione drew around her a long white cloak in which she was wrapped, and started to her feet.

"Anything wrong? Sick?" asked Sally Meade, swooping down on their corner with keen suspicion in her dark eyes.

"Hermione's feet are too cold to dance," said Maida, in a towering rage. "You went and sent for that angelic lanky girl you're all tagging after, and she's so snowy white she's given Hermione cold feet!"

"Oh, come, Maida Clayton, no good having apoplexy!" said Sally. "Do you suppose my mother and I would let you put over anything that Sylvia wouldn't like? I mean if she hadn't been here, do you imagine we'd stand for—for what we wouldn't stand for? Mother's down on anything not ladylike, and that night at your house I hated your costume and dance and the whole show—if you want to know. If I'd had my wits about me I'd have got out as Sylvia did, but I'm such a chump about getting myself together to act in time on my convictions. Convict all right, just the same. And as to Sylvia Bell, why wouldn't we tag after her? She doesn't try to pull us. She just goes right along, only she always seems to go along a foot and

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a half, or two feet above our level. Not a mean, a shady, a doubtful thing about Sylvia. And bubbling over with fun. And pretty. Well, say! Don't have to look to see it. Everybody admires her, old and young, men and women. Paxton's proud of Sylvia Bell, Captain Sylvia! So don't you imagine you can come in here and change anything, because we know what we've got. We don't grudge her anything, though every boy in the place has a case on her, more or less, and Gerald Ritchie's seems to be more!"

Wicked Sally knew where to plant her arrow. Maida flushed, and was about to say something angrier than before when Sylvia came over to them.

"You're a nice hostess, Sally Meade!" she said. "They're all waiting for you to decide whether to dance or play games! Some of them want to play regular foolish, forfeit games. Going to Jerusalem, and that kind. Come, start something. But Miss Elmsley—maybe she was going to dance for you, Sally?"

"Yes, come upstairs with her and me, Sylvia! Miss Elmsley was just going up to get ready; weren't you? Come," cried Sally, hastily, for she knew that in an instant Maida would say something to Sylvia which would be outrageous, and which, as hostess, she would be obliged to resent. "No good turning the house into a regular old Flanders field!" thought Sally, the incorrigible.

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To her relief Sylvia turned away; she had looked smilingly at Maida, whom she had not seen since the Hospital sewing meeting when Maida had been so furious with her. She had not known whether Maida would speak to her or not, and evidently she would not. Sylvia had turned away to avoid trouble, and Sally drew a long breath.

Sally's guests fell to playing old-fashioned games with great zest, the majority proving to be in a capricious mood that sent them to bridging the not-long distance backward into their childhood.

No one but Sally Meade knew that Maida Clayton had left the house in a violent temper, followed by little Hermione Elmsley in tears. Sally did not say anything to any one that night, but she resolved to get to the bottom of the little dancer's troubles the next day. She would get Sylvia, and perhaps Ruth Hapgood, to help her. "If Sylvia gets busy Hermione Elmsley will sing Lucrezia Borgia: 'It's better to laugh than be sighing'," thought admiring Sally.

As there was no dancing Sylvia had not needed her dancing shoes till just before she was going home. It was flying in the face of opportunity to leave that house where such a pianist, and such a player of dance music as Mrs. Meade was, without one dance; the guests begged for one.

Mrs. Meade was ready—she was always ready to give the Paxton young folk pleasure—when Sylvia discovered that one of her dainty white

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silk pumps had been lost out of the bag which Jack Jarvis handed to her when she asked him for it.

"Oh, dear! They are such comfy, such pretty ones!" sighed Sylvia, regretting her loss. "My shoes aren't heavy, but they're street shoes. Do you mind, Sally?"

"Only if it bothers you, Sylvia," Sally had answered, and Sylvia danced in her white kid street pumps, not so agreeably, but not badly incommoded.

The Hapgoods were going home with Sylvia.

"Why mayn't we form a bodyguard, and all escort Sylvia?" suggested Jack Jarvis.

"I can look after Ruth and her both," Lloyd growled, but Sylvia pulled his sleeve.

"Let Jack Jarvis come, too, and walk with Ruth, you goose!" she whispered.

Lloyd was helpless, so he submitted with what grace he could command.

"Goose yourself, Tink!" he said after they were out on the street, dropping behind the other pair. "Ruth nothing! Don't you know he's swiped your dancing shoe?"

"Lloyd, I'd box your ears if he wouldn't see me!" cried Sylvia, stopping short in real annoyance. "He has not! What for?"

"How do I know? Ever hear of Cinderella?" growled Lloyd, annoyed himself.

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CHAPTER VIII

"Is She Kind As She Is Fair?"

SYLVIA was up the next morning and out early to look for her lost dancing pump.

"It's too provoking!" she thought after a fruitless search along the way that she had gone to the Meade house the night before. "I've not only lost my beloved shoe—and I never had a pair I liked so well—but I've lost my sail. I never missed so many mornings since I owned *The Walloping Window Blind* as I have this summer. I wonder if it can be growing up, creeping in around me when I'm not looking. It shall not! I'll look from now on. I am having more to do with the girls and boys. I'm not so solitary and free as I was. I never thought about it. Sylvia Bell, my poor blind, doting, trusting creature, eighteen years old will get you if you don't watch out!"

She turned from the foot of Sally's steps and began to retrace her course, still looking on either hand and poking in the grass along the sidewalks as she went. although a white shoe could not be hidden; the turf was kept short.

"Could it possibly be that Lloyd guessed right?"

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thought Sylvia. "No; he wouldn't! Why should he? So utterly silly in the first place, and, besides, what would he want of *my* shoe? He'd better be sensible! Flubdub! Stealing a shoe! Fancy! If there's anything sillier than silliness——" Sylvia became conscious of the phraseology of her thoughts, laughed, and raced O'Malley for their home, throwing her annoyance to the winds with a practical resolve to stay a young girl.

Sally Meade came over immediately after lunch; Ruth was already there. These days which were passing were important ones in the laboratory, to the experiment drawing toward its completion. It was understood by the girls that Sylvia would not be free till afternoon.

"Have some fudge, Sally," said Ruth, the instant Sally appeared. "I made a lot, and it's too warm to keep it; I brought some with me; it's turning sugary."

"No apologies necessary, Ruthie!" laughed Sally. "Fudge is sufficient reason for offering anybody fudge! Sylvia, I came to talk about Hermione Elmsley."

"I rather suspected there were things to say about that girl. Nice, isn't she?" asked Sylvia.

"She's awfully nice," Sally said, emphatically. "She's an orphan. An uncle's wife brought her up, and now the uncle is dead and she hasn't any one really related to her. The aunt had her taught dancing, trained to be a professional; Hermione

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showed talent and she really loved to learn. She loves to dance still, but she's grown up and there's a lot about it to bother her. People like the Claytons, who don't seem to see any more than moles! You know interpretative dancing can be perfectly lovely, or perfectly ugly, and its ugliness lots of people don't mind. We do, but lots of people are colour-blind. Maida Clayton and her mother, for instance—costumes and all, they don't see, or else they don't care, what's in good taste and what isn't. Hermione has taken the greatest liking to you, Sylvia, and she refused Maida when she wanted a dance Hermione knew you'd hate. So Maida's mad as hops with Hermione, and she won't give her a rather big check she had promised her for private work for Maida this summer. Hermione needs that check like everything. She has her engagement at the hotel, but it doesn't pay enough, and she needs money, yet she has thrown over Maida. Now I think it's up to us to stand by her. She says she's going to be a true artist, and a true girl, and not use her art except for really beautiful effects—she meant effects on minds, as well as eyes. Now we ought to help her out, I say; especially you who set this matter going by bolting that night from Maida's, and whom Hermione sets up as a sort of conscience."

"Oh, dear! I didn't stop to consider that night at Maida's; just felt like getting out, and got out, with Lloyd to back me up and take me. I don't like it one bit to seem to have set myself up for a

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censor! And I didn't, truly, I didn't!" cried Sylvia, distressed. "But I don't mean I was wrong in the other way. You can't be wrong when something 'goes against you,' as Cassie says. If it's food it'll harm you, and if it's bigger than that, it's still worse for you. But I'm only Captain Sylvia, and captains have no business preaching, especially girl captains at my age. But we ought to stand by Hermione. She's a good deal of a trump. How shall we do it?"

"Naturally, she won't take money unless she's earned it. I haven't been able to see the way myself, but I expect you to. You're like Sentimental Tommy in finding a way, Sylvia," declared Sally.

"It's not so easy," began Sylvia, but Ruth interrupted her with a little cry of triumph.

"Small, insignificant Ruth has it," she cried. "I wouldn't have it, but that I already had it—the idea, I mean. Let's have a fête. Let's get the Yacht Club people interested, and the night of the fête have all the yachts, trimmed up and lighted, to carry spectators across to Hen and Chickens Island, and charge quite a good deal for tickets to see it, and announce that the money was for expenses, and then make part of the expense paying Hermione Elmsley for training us."

"Ruth, for pity's sake! Training us! For *what?* To sail over to Hen and Chickens by night? And what would the spectators see? The island? The

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boats? One another? Of all programmes! But it does seem as though you'd left out something," cried Sylvia, while Sally fairly shrieked with laughter.

"Only the whole thing!" Ruth cried, laughing, but half annoyed. "We'd have a Dance of the Dryads and Naiads—or something on that order."

"Too bad, but I don't believe there are any more creatures of that sort ending in 'ad'! But it begins well, Ruthie," said Sylvia.

"Have a floor laid down over on the island, and a place fixed up for an orchestra—I suppose the string quartette from Baytide, with the two flutes added which we have when we want to outdo ourselves!" Ruth went on with growing enthusiasm. "And all the dancers in costume, Greek, dryad and naiad style."

"What did they wear? Draperies, chiefly; I'd look well as either of those before-mentioned lassies, now wouldn't I!" said Sally. "However, I don't have to take part. Pretty nice scheme, and a big one for a small thing like you to originate, Ruth Hapgood."

"My brain is large however small my body may be," declared Ruth, witheringly. "You certainly would take part, Sally Meade; you're a dream of a dancer! I suppose chitons are the proper thing, but awfully nice ones, very full and floating; not that sheeting effect they usually have in school stunts. I saw a Greek play once—cotton chitons,

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gilt-paper hair fillets and belts—girdles. Girls, it was awful! Funny, though! We'd make the boys take part, and we'd dress them up in more solid stuff, but ours would be—misty!" Ruth waved her hands to express the zephyr qualities words did not fully convey.

"Well, but Hermione!" insisted Sylvia. "Where does she come in? Pretty nice fancy-dress ball you've sketched, but *Hermione?* Is only her name to fit into your Grecian pattern? I thought we set out to do something for her?"

"Didn't I say she should train us?" Ruth protested. "She'll teach us fancy dances, *tableaux vivants*, and we'll pay her what she's lost by crossing Maida—or more. And what we take in will go for expenses. Paxton will be satisfied to help us to a good time; everybody will love it! And no one but ourselves need ever know that we got up the whole thing in order to have expenses—Hermione's pay."

"Ruth Hapgood, I didn't suppose you had it in you," declared Sally Meade, who saw with delight the whole harmonious plan unfolded before her.

"It's truly great, Ruthie, you little wonder," cried Sylvia. "When would it come off? I suppose that would be decided after we saw how rapidly we took to our training."

"It should be the night of the August full moon," said Sally. "That's when the hotels are fullest, and that would give us most profit. Though if we did run behind our expenses, it wouldn't matter. We'd

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like to make up a purse for Hermione, only she wouldn't have it, so we won't care if we club together to pay for the training for the dance. Isn't it great to have settled anything so big in such a short time?"

"If the rest, especially the boys, see it. We won't tell any one but Lloyd about our reason for wanting this. Maybe they won't help out with it," suggested Sylvia.

"You know as well as I do that they follow your lead as if you were Mary and they the lambs, Sylvia Bell!" said Sally. "Though Maida Clayton turns that around, and calls you 'the Bell Wether,' because they follow you. But it's the same idea."

"Stretch of politeness to call it an idea!" commented Sylvia. "I'd say it was idealess. Sally and Ruthie, I'm going to have a caller. I see Enos Coffin coming this way."

"Who in the world——" began Sally, but Ruth cried:

"The person you went with Doctor Ritchie to hunt up. I know. Come along, Sally; it's most private and confidential!"

"Go sailing with me in the morning, but very, very early?" Sylvia called after them, as Ruth and Sally went down the steps.

"Not I, thanks!" Sally called back. "No early bird gets this worm, 'cause it's a prudent worm that stays in its comfy worm hole in the early dawn."

"I'll go, Sylvia. May Lloyd come?" Ruth said.

"If he wants to. I don't mind Lloyd and you;

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it's old timesy," said Sylvia, and turned to greet the approaching Enos Coffin.

"Are you rooting for Lloyd, Ruth?" hinted Sally, as the two girls gained the sidewalk.

"I haven't a brother, and Lloyd's almost like one to me. Wouldn't you want Sylvia as near to you as you could get her? She doesn't see one bit how Lloyd feels, she's so used to him," said Ruth.

"Far be it from me to blame you for trying to capture the splendidest girl in the world," said Sally, heartily. "But it's not only that she doesn't see Lloyd as she would a stranger. She won't see any one, not that way! Sylvia Bell is more like Diana, and Atalanta, and Daphne, and all that lot, than any one I ever saw."

"To tell the truth, she's the only one I ever saw in the least like them," said Ruth, whose quiet mousey ways covered considerable straight seeing.

"Precious few girls are like a clear, western breeze, that won't let itself be tangled up in anything less than a cloud, or a tall pine tree. That's Sylvia!"

"Poetical, maybe, but true surely," agreed Sally Meade.

In the meantime, Sylvia was saying:

"How do you do, Mr. Coffin? I am glad that you came; I was wondering if I must look you up—or Allimetta."

"It would of made a wreck of my lifetime, Miss Bell, if you'd of done so, as to Allimetta. My life-

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time and happiness is bound up in her, if I may so strongly express it." Enos Coffin looked at Sylvia, his expression so much more lugubrious than his name that she marvelled at it.

"It doesn't seem to be too strong a way to express it," said Sylvia. "Not if it is true. I suppose a person may be necessary to happiness."

"Miss Bell, that's the truest thing you ever said," Enos sadly assured Sylvia. "How's the dog? How are you, Mahoney? Or was it Muldoon you called him? Mulligan! That's him; Mulligan! Miss Bell, Allimetta's done it herself. She's wrecked my lifetime. Gone back on me, give me back the ring. Here's the money your young lady workin' for you loaned me. Allimetta's told me she'd rather have someone dif'rent. No special one, just in genrul. Would it be int'rusting to you to see the ring?"

"Yes," said Sylvia, having difficulty with her lips, and being painfully conscious that her cheeks were crimson from her struggle to achieve a suitable expression. "I'm sorry to hear this, but perhaps Allimetta will think better of her decision. It's some comfort that she has not found your successor. That gives you hope."

"The word and me is strangers, Miss Bell," persisted Enos. "My mother went so far as to ask Allimetta and I to live with her." He shook his head in a long pause. "Nothing doing!" he added at last.

Sylvia was closely examining the ring which Enos

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offered her, set with a great many tiny diamonds massed together to make the marquise setting which poor Enos had described to her as "marked keys."

"Sorry!" she murmured: "I never saw a ring like this. Shall I call Norah Leary to acknowledge this money?"

"No, miss; I have all confidences that you will hand it to her," said Enos. "You might count it in front of me; then there can't come up a statement of my being error oneus." Enos made two distinct words of the one he mispronounced. "What I'd like to the tune of being gratified, would be if you was to see Allimetta and urge her to see that till she gets another sort of Coffin she can't get any one better'n I to marry. Not to *marry*," Enos repeated after a full stop, as if, had Allimetta wanted a chauffeur or a gardener, it might have been another matter. Sylvia choked so peculiarly that Enos eyed her anxiously.

"It would be a serious responsibility to urge any one to marry if she were in doubt," she said. "But if ever I meet Allimetta——?"

"Briggs," Enos supplied the last name eagerly.

"Allimetta Briggs," Sylvia gravely accepted it, "I will see if anything can be done."

"I will make certain that you see her, miss, and I sure am grateful. Paxton-by-the-Sea has awful respect for Miss Captain Sylvia Bell, and your recommend would be, as I might say, a boost. I will take my departures." Enos bowed himself toward the steps, and Sylvia, hastily adding the last

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bills to those she had already counted, finding the sum correct, bade Enos Coffin good-bye and ran into the house, O'Malley at her heels, to throw herself face downward into the pillows of the library couch and laugh till she cried, waving her feet and clicking her heels together as she did so, finding outlet for her mirth inadequate.

"Sylvia, my dear girl, what and why?" cried Miss Bell, disapprovingly.

"Oh, I wonder what! And I'm sure I don't know why!" gasped Sylvia. She turned over on her side and told her aunt about Enos Coffin's call with renewed outbursts of glee.

Miss Bell laughed; Sylvia had been afraid that she would not find it funny. "You are an extraordinary girl," Miss Bell said, not abandoning her disapproval nevertheless. "You seem to get mixed up with the most bizarre affairs, and to know the most unnecessary people. Now when I was a girl, I never stepped beyond my own proper sphere."

"There, Aunt Emily, that's it! Now I understand. I never could quite make it out before. You sort of inherited your experiences, while I go around collecting them, like the people gathering seaweed in the fall," Sylvia cried, triumphantly. "Of course that's it! But, oh, dear me, Aunt Emily, they are necessary people. How could they be so funny if they weren't necessary? Funny things are so—so—vitally necessary! I must go find Norah and tell her that she has the money to send for

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her little Roseleen. Not that Roseleen is not on the ocean this moment, coming over, because she is. I lent Norah the money, but she'll be relieved to have her own to return to me. Nice girl, Norah."

"Suppose you wait a moment and tell me this part of the story also," suggested Miss Bell, laying her hand detainingly on Sylvia's arm.

Sylvia willingly sat down again and did as her aunt requested, telling the story of Norah's anxiety, her devotion to the younger sister left alone at home, too pretty to leave unguarded, and of Norah's promise to their dead mother, and how she, Sylvia, had come to the rescue and lent foolish Norah the amount she had, so unwisely, let Enos Coffin have, and of how within a week little Roseleen would arrive.

She told it so well, so simply, yet with such literary instinct for the points of the story and its inherent pathos, though she slighted her own part in it, that Miss Bell looked moved when she had finished.

"Sylvia, my dear, I am truly proud of you," she said, amazingly. "I objected strongly to your Paxton nickname of Captain Sylvia, but I begin to see that it may be a name of profound and beautiful significance. A ship's captain looks after the welfare of all the passengers. I begin to think, my dear, that you will grow into a woman who looks after the welfare of the passengers upon your course of voyage through life, and that you may easily be

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Captain Sylvia, who steers straight and ministers to her fellow voyagers."

"Aunt Emily! How nice, how very nice! And how nice of you to see such a chance for me!" cried Sylvia, moved by her aunt's visible emotion in making this prophecy for the girl whose youthful ways she had disapproved, and to whom she had been a thorn in the flesh, only less hurting because it was usually withdrawn to a distance. Then Sylvia went happily singing down the wide hall to find Norah and make her happy.

"See, Norah, see!" she cried, coming into the kitchen, with Enos Coffin's roll of bills in her hand, holding it aloft. "Here's your nice, tight wad of wealth. The sad Enos Coffin mourned his way hither and has paid his debts. So now you needn't feel that Roseleen is not sailing toward you on your own provision for her."

" 'Deed, then, miss, she'd not be on her way but for you," said Norah, taking the money absent-mindedly, but instantly offering it back to Sylvia.

"Keep it, miss; 'tis yours, so 'tis, an' not mine, an' that, nor anything else, cannot pay my debt to you."

"Nonsense, Norah! What is it to lend to any one for a wee little time? I'll tell you! Keep that money, and let me keep back a dollar or so now and then from your wages, rather than pay it all at once. When Roseleen comes you may want to buy her new clothes. Sometimes people from across seas have

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other fashions, when they come, from what we're wearing here, and you'll need money to fit your pretty little Roseleen out like American roses—American Beauties, I suppose they must be! Wouldn't that be better?" Sylvia suggested her plan delicately, afraid of offending Norah.

But there was no need of such fear. Norah's eyes filled, and she looked down, then she looked up, and the same eyes laughed.

"You don't say the half of it, miss!" she cried. "'Deed I was a queer one when I come over, with me sturdy boots and me heavy dresses! But 'twas good an' long-wearin' they was, an' I had the sense not to discard 'em entirely, as some girls do, comin' in. But I took care to wear 'em where the fine ladies born here an' workin' in houses round about me wouldn't be seein' 'em. Miss Sylvia, dear, it's the kindest heart you have I ever had the luck to meet, an' it's the kindness that thinks of small things many's the one would pass over as nothin' that does be countin', to my way of thinkin', more than the big things that everyone can see clear, an' more by token, never may come your way to be doin' at all, at all! Sure, I'll be glad to have money to buy for Roseleen what she'll be wantin'; let her be like other girls, as all girls is like one another in such matters. That's sayin' it don't inconvenience you to keep back on my wages, an' let me pay here an' there the part of my debt that can be paid, leavin' the rest to God, who is better to be owin' you than such as Norah Leary."

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"Norah, it doesn't bother one bit to straighten this up slowly. I'm watching the shipping news and when Roseleen's ship is due, off you go to New York to meet her. About a week, a little less, it should be, Norah. Are you happy?" cried Sylvia.

"Happy, miss! How'll I be sayin' it? Sure I sing all the day long, till I think Cassandra 'll put me out, an' I waken in the night tremblin' an' cryin' with my arms around Roseleen in my dream, fair dyin' with happiness, an' callin' on her to tell me is she really here," said Norah. "An' all the while I'm singin' by day, yet is my heart callin' on God to let a few guardian angels, whose people are not in any danger from accident, nor temptation, to go join Roseleen's angel to keep from the ship she's on tempest an' lightnin', icebergs, explosions, an' the like. Sure it's a time of the joyfulness that's sharpened with fear, an' makes it hard waitin'!"

"Norah, you're a dear!" cried Sylvia. "I'll let my guardian angel help for a few days, and be extra careful of myself till Roseleen's landed."

"Miss Sylvia," said Cassandra, and motioned Sylvia into the pantry with sundry backward tosses of her head, as if Norah could not construe this to mean that she wanted to say something that Norah must not hear.

"It's only this," murmured Cassie very low, when Sylvia had followed her, and the swinging door into the kitchen was shut. "I wanted to tell you that you were correct as to Norah. It was worry that

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ailed her. She is never forgetful now; does all, and more that I want done, in my own way, too, and is thoroughly satisfactory. I may say now that I prefer her to Susie, who I did not expect would be replaced."

"Fine, Cassie! I thought it would be so!" said Sylvia, patting the gaunt woman who adored her and had faithfully watched over her from her birth.

Sylvia ran off through the kitchen, waving her hand to Norah in token of the joyful hours which were just ahead. Norah turned to Cassandra, wiping her eyes on the corner of her apron.

"Beautiful she is, Miss Sylvia, Cassandra, but she is as kind, and kinder than she is beautiful. God love her, as He does! What is it to be as fair as one of the angels, an' kind an' pityin' like them?"

"It's very nice, indeed," said Cassandra, the New Englander.

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CHAPTER IX

"For Beauty Lives With Kindness"

YOU'RE right, 'Charles O'Malley, the Irish Dragoon,' by Charles Lever!" cried Sylvia, running downstairs in her sea-stained, shabby, well-loved costume for sailing to be met by O'Malley with leaps and yelps of delight. "You are right entirely! I am going out, and, if you like, so are you. Oh, dog of the world, isn't it great at something before six on a morning like this?"

O'Malley clearly expressed his opinion that it was indeed great. O'Malley never became dulled to the joy of sailing, nor for that matter ever lost the first keen rapture of his youth when his mistress invited him to go anywhere with her, by land or sea.

"It's not only alive with birds this morning, but it turns clumsy things with feet into birds! Don't you feel winged, my terrier?" Sylvia asked, taking O'Malley's head between her palms and rumpling it delightfully till O'Malley could hardly endure his excessive joy.

"Come, then, and let's be off. If Ruth and Lloyd keep me waiting I don't know what I'll do to them afterward!"

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Sylvia started on a run down the steps, down the long walk, out the gate and over on the dunes, O'Malley bounding ahead of her, but proud to belong to a girl so tall and fleet of limb that it made it worth while to exceed her speed.

Sylvia ran like a deer. She did have a great deal of the Diana likeness, even of likeness to the west wind, to which her friends, Ruth and Sally, had compared her. Her skirt was of heavy linen, sea-stained, faded; her hat was a soft felt pulled down close over her hair, and yet thus costumed, she looked like a nymph as she ran free and fast across the dune-top, with the ocean stretched out to her left.

Sylvia slowed up a little, descending the precipitous path from the dune to the beach, but still she came down so recklessly that Gabriel Gaby, watching her from his customary seat in front of his shack on the sands, Mate purring on his shoulder, drew a sharp breath inward.

"My gracious grandmother! That girl must keep the angels that have charge of her pretty busy lest she dash her foot against a stone!" he muttered. "Comin' down a path like that's if 'twas Pawl Mawl in London, or one of the Paris bul'vards!"

O'Malley dashed ahead of Sylvia, to greet Gabriel Gaby and whine at Mate, whose every appearance was a new pang to him that she was protected from being chased. Mate herself thought O'Malley extremely silly and temperamental; she had long out-

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lived the time when she feared he might make things unpleasant for a cat of her rank.

"Sylvie, you'll land a com-plete wreck at the bottom o' that dune some day," Gabriel remonstrated. "Why can't you walk?"

"I don't know, Gabriel Gaby! Still less do I know why I can't fly; I feel like flying," said Sylvia. "I'm going out. Seen Ruth and Lloyd anywhere?"

"No, I haven't, not till this minute," Gabriel twinkled at her. "What's that a-comin' down the beach this minute? Looks to me like a pair of cousins, last name Hapgood. Sylvia, do you know what? I kinder miss your harmonicum. Why don't you bring her down an' blow us a toon, Matey an' me? I miss it. Miss you, too; you don't seem to be anywheres lately!"

"Really, Gabriel Gaby, you've said it!" cried Sylvia. "I don't get time to do anything nice, nor consecutive. I don't know why. Do you suppose it's because I've been grown up such a short time, and haven't learned how to place it? I will bring my harmonica and play to you—play *with* you. Didn't we use to have beautiful duets when I was still young, and you taught me?"

Gabriel Gaby nodded hard. "'Twas a pleasant time, but I don't see why you can't keep it up, once'n a while 't least. I sit here—Mate'n me—meditatin', one of us purrin', t'other smokin', an' the harmonicum'd fit in like it al'ays did, pretty neat. You blew wonderful. Lot's o' girls don't have the

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wind, *nor* the gen'us for to blow steady an' expressive on that instrument."

"Gabriel, truly I'll try to come," Sylvia assured him. "I haven't been to see my dear Mrs. Leveritt in I don't know when."

"You certainly have not, Sylvia," Ruth coming up corroborated her. "Aunt Helen said the other day that she would be pleased to meet you again."

"Good morning," said Sylvia. "I know, Ruthie, and I would rather see her than any one in Paxton—of course Mr. Clement Bell excepted! She did more for me than I could say that summer when you first came to visit her and I was a wild hobbledehoy of fifteen, needing her gentle hints, and her dear ways, and teaching. But she knows I love her and want to go. Aunt Emily leaves to-morrow; that will give me the afternoon."

Lloyd had been untying Sylvia's pretty shellacked tender, and had run her down to the water's edge to go out to *The Walloping Window Blind*, tugging at her mooring, much as O'Malley would have tugged if he had been tied up and had seen his mistress on the beach, coming to him.

"She's so impatient!" laughed Sylvia, pointing to her beloved little craft.

The three young people went out to the catboat in the tender. Sylvia would not let Lloyd row.

"No, Lloyd," she said. "This is my day. I'm going to be fifteen years old and do precisely as I did when I first knew you. Then you didn't feel it

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incumbent on you gallantly to do my work. If every dog has his day, then the owner of such a dog as you should have her day, isn't it so, my O'Malley? Sit down, Lloyd, and be a boy who never sailed in a catboat in all his life before, and hasn't reached the point of thinking girls worth serving, anyway!"

"*Girls* may not be, still!" muttered Lloyd with significant emphasis.

Sylvia ignored him, and also tried to ignore the annoyance in herself which this hint called forth. Sylvia "hated nonsense," as she was always telling herself, not caring to define what constituted nonsense. To be a good comrade; to have happy days filled with good times that entailed no responsibilities, no consequences; to be light-hearted, free, gaily affectionate to everyone whom she liked, liking no one enough to make her breath come one bit faster at his approach; this would have described Sylvia's ideal if she had put it into words. Sally Meade was right; Sylvia was at the Atalanta stage of her development, running away from what might entangle her fleet-footed joy.

Sylvia got up the sail of her catboat unaided, but she did concede to Lloyd the privilege of unfastening the painter that held *The Walloping Window Blind* fast.

"Now, we're off!" she sighed, settling down into the stern, pulling her hat over her eyes and jamming her tiller down hard to swing around free of the red buoy that danced foolishly on the top of the water just beyond her mooring.

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O'Malley went forward and took his customary place beside the mast, braced and cautious, though he would dearly have liked a swim, provided he had not got it by falling overboard.

"Is there anything in all the world like it?" Sylvia murmured, stretching out her length, which was great, and bracing her feet, while she loosened her skirt at her knees with her old-time boyish motion.

"A car's not so bad, either," said Lloyd. "*Gwendolen* and I are coming after you at two to-day, Tink, and you're going with me for such a spin in *Gwendolen* as you never had yet; maybe to Boston. We'd have dinner there at night and get back here by ten or eleven. I've been having it in mind this long while; to-day is the day when it will happen."

Sylvia shook her head. "I'm going to lunch with Mrs. Ritchie to-day, Lloyd. No such mad trip for me," she said.

"Break the engagement," growled Lloyd, looking cross.

"To lunch? An engagement a week old, and with an invalid old enough to be my mother?" remonstrated Sylvia, and was annoyed with herself that her colour, always quick to come and go, mounted at the thought suggested by her saying that Mrs. Ritchie might be her mother.

Ruth pounced on the word.

"Sure she doesn't want to be? Why does she ask you to lunch, Sylvia?" she said.

"Yes. When fellows rope their mothers in to

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back them up with a girl, that's another thing from trotting a girl around and just making it jolly on both sides," added Lloyd.

"Oh, dear; oh, dear me!" cried Sylvia, tears of vexation springing into her eyes. "When it's such a morning for sailing, and it's so perfectly great to be out! Didn't I tell you it was to be one of our first summer times? It's heaps worse than helping me with the boat—I mean heaps less like ourselves that first summer, to be suspecting such perfectly disgusting things! Even you joining in, Ruth! Mrs. Ritchie likes a young thing around, I suppose; poor soul, shut in and suffering! You'd think if you two find me such a marvel as you try to make me believe I am, you'd be less puzzled to account for someone's wanting me to come to see her. I think it's perfectly horrid, and I've a mind to put about and go in!"

"Why, Sylvia, dear, please, please forgive me! I'm terribly sorry!" cried Ruth, going over gingerly—she never had quite come to feel that a boat was safe to move about in—and putting her arms around Sylvia, who passively allowed it, but made no response.

"Most people wouldn't think it reflected discredit on a girl to have a mother want her for—— Oh, I won't, I won't say it, Sylvia!" Ruth cried, eagerly, for Sylvia twitched herself away from her embrace. "Of course poor Mrs. Ritchie would love to have you come there if she were an elderly spinster, or the

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widow she is, with ten daughters, and no—— You know what, Sylvia! I don't dare say the word!"

In spite of herself Sylvia laughed. "But it is horrid to suspect things," she insisted.

"I don't see any use in sticking your head in a haymow, and let a horse kick your feet off, declaring all the time there isn't a horse because you don't see him," growled Lloyd, not ready to yield his point. "A fact is a fact, whether you like it or not, and if a thing is so, the best way is to face it and act accordingly."

"Oh, what stupid things boys are!" cried Sylvia, this time laughing with such enjoyment of sulky Lloyd that her ruffled feelings were smoothed. "That's just like a boy to insist on facts, and want labels stuck all over the place; making it impossible to see anything except in one way! Of course that's not the way to treat facts, you foolish boy! The way to do is to ignore them, treat them as if they were just the opposite of what they are, and the first thing you know they'll feel forced to behave like that other thing you call them, and where'll your fact be—gone to pieces and reassembled in a new form! Silly Lloyd!"

Lloyd stared at Sylvia, then reluctantly smiled.

"I'll be blessed if that's not exactly what you do, Tinker Bell. And now I think of it, it does work. But it doesn't suit me; I'd rather face things," he said.

"And wring their little necks if they won't do what

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you want them to," Sylvia supplemented him, making him a derisive little grimace. "Sure you would! You're downright honest, but a wee bit bossy, my little lad. I'm outright enough, but I know you come out better, and a long distance farther, if you lead things with a pretty ribbon around their necks, than if you wring their necks!"

"It's true that a girl can make things go her way by pretending she doesn't see how they're headed," added Ruth, going over to Sylvia and abandoning Lloyd without shame or hesitation.

"I'll be darned if I see how this deep wisdom hitches up with Mrs. Ritchie, or Gerald Ritchie," said blundering Lloyd.

"Whose name no one has mentioned," hinted Sylvia, sweetly. "Never mind, Lloyd, if you can't see things always. Blind people are usually happy, they say. Do you see that tallest tree over there on Hen and Chickens Island? Look out for your heads when the boom swings over; I'm going to head her for that tree."

Sylvia put her catboat about; it minded the helm "like a breeze," as she said, and they settled down to a long tack, dropping unpleasant subjects, and enjoying the glorious morning, or its earliest hours, for Sylvia had to get back to her father, and the laboratory and the preceding breakfast, by eight o'clock.

It was a perfect morning; *The Walloping Window Blind* did herself and her skipper credit, and of

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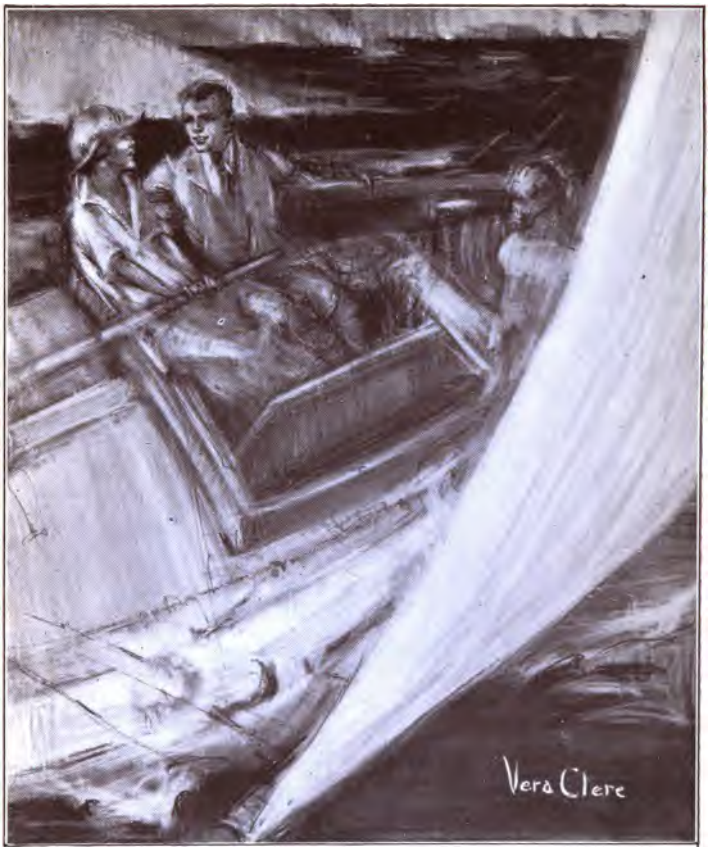

"'*Is there anything in the world like it?*'"

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course the three on board—four, for O'Malley deserved counting—had a good time.

"But if you really want a decent sail you have to go alone, with your dog, I'm discovering," thought Sylvia after she had brought her small craft to her mooring, had bidden Ruth and Lloyd good-bye and was, rather slowly for her, walking home across the dune. "If Ruth had come alone it wouldn't have been half spoiled. Even if she did start a silly notion, she wouldn't have mattered. I see one thing: After you are grown up you've got to get girls by themselves if you want a good time—unless it's a dance, or car-driving, of course. But you can't have a good time with boys around after you're past sixteen or so! They fuss, they—they get silly! Boys spoil everything after you're past sixteen."

With which piece of philosophy, from which some girls of eighteen might have vehemently differed, Sylvia cheered up and ran into the house to hurry into land clothing, a pretty morning gown. Even though her Aunt Emily had come to approve her, Sylvia knew that it would risk a relapse from her favour if her aunt were to see her tall niece in these shabby garments which she still loved to wear.

"Short hours for your assistant to-day, Mr. Bell?" hinted Sylvia, having eaten breakfast, seen her aunt off to a round of calls in the summer colony, and started, her hand in her father's arm, to walk with him over the beautiful turf of the Bell place to the laboratory.

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"Must she be early dismissed? Why?" asked Mr. Bell, smiling into Sylvia's dark blue eyes, so like his own, and so little below the level of his.

"To lunch with Mrs. Ritchie. She has sent me an urgent invitation; I like her a great deal, and I felt that I could hardly say 'no.' She's so ill, and so patient, Father!" replied Sylvia.

"I know. She's a sweet woman, patient, as you say, and suffering. I'm glad to lend her my tall girl. But, Sylvia, tread carefully! I can easily imagine any one wanting my treasure for her own sake, but Mrs. Ritchie is Gerald's mother, and a mother can be a great assistance to her son," hinted Mr. Bell.

"Oh, Father! You, too!" cried Sylvia, blushing painfully. "It takes all the snap out of being decent and friendly!"

"My dear, so it does!" cried Mr. Bell, self-reproachfully. "Never mind your cruel parent, Daughter, and go your frank, honest way, unafraid. I'm better fit to deal with specimens in the laboratory than with fine issues of brain and heart, my Sylvia."

"Father! How can you? That's worse than suspecting that people want to steal your assistant for their medical student sons," cried Sylvia.

Sylvia worked attentively in the laboratory until noon, as she always worked. Her interest in this work increased steadily, and now that the experiment over which her father had dreamed and laboured for years was nearing its completion, which would prove it a triumph, or a failure, Sylvia often

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found herself tense with excitement during her working hours. She was too young, too full of life to keep her work before her during playtime.

At twelve o'clock Sylvia left her table, her carefully coloured slides, recording progress of the specimens under observation, dropped a swift kiss on her father's head as she passed him, not disturbing him, and hastened to dress for lunch.

Gerald Ritchie had arranged to fetch her in his car at half-past twelve, but a half hour was enough time to dress for Sylvia, who never made a long business of her toilette.

She coiled her dark masses of hair around her head, pulling it, soft and drooping, over the tips of her pretty ears. Sylvia's hairdressing was always individual, a pretty, almost old-fashioned effect of soft, lustrous tresses, full of natural ways of their own. A shade of blue crêpe meteor, which matched and brought out the dark blue of her eyes, was her dress; it fell in straight folds around her figure, simple tucks its only adornment, and a fichu collar of finest embroidered organdie came down to her belt, crossing below the base of her shapely neck.

She put on a white Panama hat, trimmed with a bow of wide velvet ribbon on one side, and took her gloves in her hand to put them on in the cool library, for the day had grown warm as the sun mounted.

"I feel particularly young-ladyfied," thought Sylvia. "It must be going to lunch with a lady of fifty, and wearing a darker dress! I do like white!"

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But in her secret heart Sylvia knew that the feeling of maturity had its root in the several warnings that she had had of the possible object of this invitation, and that she was waiting, not quite calmly, for Gerald to take her in his car to lunch with his mother.

Gerald was prompt to the moment. Sylvia could not know that he had waited near by for fifteen minutes in order to be so.

He looked Sylvia over with unmistakable approval, from her lovely face, flushed with a natural blush; her simple, fine gown; her remarkably good Panama hat; her shoes, pretty, yet fit to walk in; her entire effect of sweet maidenhood and absence of vanity.

"You don't wear tilted-stilt shoes, Sylvia," remarked Gerald, helping Sylvia out of the car at his own gate.

"Well, you see I'm so likely to run, Gerald, I couldn't," Sylvia answered, demurely, but her eyes laughed.

Mrs. Ritchie's hair was snowy white. Her face, which must have been remarkably pretty, was white and thin; her whole drooping frame was eloquent of the constant endurance of pain. But she greeted Sylvia almost gaily, and not once during her visit allowed her to feel the oppression of an invalid hostess.

Sylvia forgot all about herself in quick recognition of this courage. She set herself to entertain this poor lady, and in the invalid lost sight of Gerald Ritchie's mother.

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Sylvia had the gift of amusing, as she had the gift of sympathy. She made Mrs. Ritchie laugh more than once with her account of Cassandra's fidelity and its cast-iron quality which made Sylvia call her Casabianca. Yet she never made Cassie absurd, only funny in a way that was at the same time admirable. O'Malley came in for his full share of Sylvia's chatter. She found that Mrs. Ritchie truly loved dogs; after that there was no trouble in painting O'Malley as he was—an amusing, dear fellow. Gerald watched and listened, his shining eyes, his mounting colour, his gentle, happy smile revealing what he felt when he saw his mother made cheerful, laughing, plainly enjoying and yielding herself up to loving admiration for—Sylvia Bell!

"What a girl! What a girl!" was all that Gerald found to say to himself, but he said that so often, with such fervour, that it included all that might have been said of lovely Sylvia.

Gerald disappeared after lunch for a time; it did not occur to Sylvia, till she had returned home, that it was not an accidental disappearance.

"You have been a dear, a most dear, unselfish girl, to come here to-day," said Mrs. Ritchie, drawing Sylvia down beside her on a couch. "You can't guess what a pleasure it has been to me, how much you have given me out of your abundance of youth, health, wit, and loveliness! My dear child, I do thank you."

"Oh, Mrs. Ritchie, please!" Sylvia remonstrated.

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"It is kind of you to bother with a girl who can't interest you much."

"You have interested me a great deal, but, my dear, you know it's even more the joy of living that goes out from you that refreshes me. You are a lovable child, Sylvia Bell. I see almost no one but Gerald. To be sure there never was such a son as Gerald! From his childhood he has been truthful, kind, chivalric, brave. You don't know what a boy Gerald is; it's not a mother's partiality; it is true!" Mrs. Ritchie spoke eagerly.

"I always thought he was nice," said Sylvia, trying not to seem ill at ease. "When I was a small girl I liked him; I didn't like most of the big boys; I was afraid of them, but Gerald was always nice to the small fry."

"Ah, that's it. That is Gerald," cried Gerald's mother. "He is patient, sympathetic. He is a devoted son to me, a hopeless invalid, and sick people burden most boys, and many men. Don't you think it speaks volumes for my son merely to say he is everything that both a daughter and a son could be?"

"I think many good qualities must go to make up that great virtue, Mrs. Ritchie," said Sylvia, gently. "I am glad that you have this comfort."

"Are you willing to play for my mother, Sylvia?" asked Gerald Ritchie, returning at that moment. "She would be glad of a little Beethoven and Schumann, I know."

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"Surely I will play, and I'd rather play Beethoven than any one else, though he's beyond my depth," said Sylvia, rising instantly to go to the piano.

She had but taken her place and touched a few chords by way of introduction to the instrument when a gasp of pain frightened her, and she whirled around to see Gerald catch his mother in his arms, raise her as if she were a child, and go toward the door.

"One of her seizures, Sylvia. Don't be frightened. Don't come. Her maid and I will be enough. Amuse yourself till I come back. Come to see Mother again, soon," he said.

Mrs. Ritchie raised herself in Gerald's arms, halting him by a gesture.

"Sylvia, yes, come! We need you here. Be kind to us both," she managed to say, but by a supreme effort, her face dreadfully contorted with agony.

"Sylvia is always kind, Mother," said Gerald, and carried his mother away. Sylvia sat motionless, awaiting his return, not liking to leave without seeing him again, liking no more to carry out the arrangement by which he was to take her home in his car.

She was almost decided to steal away when Gerald returned.

"It's over now, Sylvia, for this time," he said. "I am sorry you had to be so frightened. I hoped she might get through the day without an attack, though she rarely escapes one each day. She is asleep; there will be no more trouble for another

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twenty-four hours, probably; at least not for some time. I'm sorry, Sylvia! '

"Goodness, Gerald, not for *me!*" cried Sylvia. "I'm sorry enough, if it comes to that. Poor Gerald! It's hard."

"Yes," said Gerald, simply. "This is why I'm studying medicine. I've seen so much that I want to be of some use; not only to Mother, to others."

And Sylvia felt her casual liking for this older boy deepen into respect, admiration, and warm into real friendliness.

"Fine old Gerald!" she said, as a boy would have spoken, her eyes moist. "Now let me walk home; I don't want to bother you."

"Do you honestly think that's the way not to bother me?" asked Gerald with a little smile, and Sylvia instantly yielded her point, warned by a note of tenderness in his voice not to argue it with him.

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CHAPTER X

"Love Doth to Her Eyes Repair"

SYLVIA, I've decided to take the morning train," announced Miss Bell at bedtime. "It allows me more leisure, I can do errands in Boston which I'm anxious to attend to, and still get to New York before dinner."

"Oh, Aunt Emily, I wonder—would it bother you too dreadfully to take Norah with you? Roseleen—her little sister—gets into New York to-morrow, and Norah must be there to meet her. She was going alone, but she's afraid of her life, and I don't like to let her go alone. She doesn't know the first thing about New York. Would it be too great a burden on you to see her safely there?" Sylvia hesitated, but uttered her plea.

"If it were," said Spartan Aunt Emily, "I think that would be no reason for not doing it. Of course I will take the girl to New York. She is pretty, and doesn't appear to be in the least fit to look after herself. See how she lent her savings to the first creature that asked her! I will not only take her with me, but I will go with her to the ship. Unless someone guarantees the young thing coming, no

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one could conjecture where she may bring up. The Ellis Island people may crate her and deport her! I'll go with Norah to get her admitted; she's not the one to face those immigration officers. I will stay over a day in New York and see the matter through."

"Aunt Emily, aren't you splendid!" cried Sylvia. "I think that's great of you!"

"The note of surprise in your voice, Sylvia Bell, is not flattering," remarked Aunt Emily, dryly. "I'm not in the least a sentimental woman, but I hope that I recognize the obligation an elderly gentlewoman has of looking after ignorant young girls. *Noblesse oblige*, Sylvia. I am a Bell. Always remember that you, also, are a Bell."

Miss Bell went with great dignity upstairs, and Sylvia and her father looked at each other with similar merriment in their eyes.

"Sort of like a tocsin, to be that sort of a Bell, isn't it, Fatherums?" suggested Sylvia. "But really, that's fine of Aunt Emily to see Norah and her Roseleen through!"

"There never was a deficiency in your aunt's principles, my dear. She does many unselfish, fine acts. Rather she suffers from a sort of rigour and excess of principles. She fits them over everybody's head, regardless of their age, size, or previous condition of servitude," laughed Mr. Bell. "But it would be an exceedingly well-regulated world if Emily could get her principles adjusted on everybody in it!"

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Thus on the following morning Miss Bell went away, with meek Norah in her neat blue serge suit and her small round straw hat.

Norah was duly grateful that she was to be protected, and Roseleen brought into the country without delays, but she was in mortal terror of the coming hours under Miss Bell's relentless kindness, and strove to shrink into a smaller space than her body actually demanded.

"Good-bye, Sylvia Bell," said Miss Bell, presenting her cool, pale cheek to Sylvia's warm young lips. "I shall take little Emily Anstruther, then, to bring up. It may, very likely will, end in her being my heir. You are sure that you are willing?"

"More than willing, Aunt Emily; glad that you will have her to love you," said Sylvia. "You know that was all settled. But, Aunt Emily, please let me say it! Do give the child heaps of fun, free fun, you know—old clothes, romping, a dog, all those genuine, sporty, lovely things! Then she'll be happy and adore you. You don't think all that harmed me, after all, do you?"

"No, Sylvia," replied Aunt Emily. "It did not. I am willing to admit that your manners are excellent, quite simple and without self-consciousness and, above all, without smartness. I loathe smartness! And there is a dewy innocence about you that is a great gift. I am willing to admit that you undoubtedly owe it to your solitary hours in the boat and in the woods. And you have become a com-

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petent housekeeper, a graceful hostess. Very well, Sylvia, I will give the little Emily something of your sort of childhood, as far as I can. She may not have your tastes; I hope she may have! Next winter I shall insist on your coming to me. A young girl like you would have an immense influence on a child; she would adore you and try to imitate you. I only hope that she is not like her mother. In any case, come and see what you think of your adopted cousin. Good-bye, Sylvia. Good-bye, Clement. I feel much better for this visit and decision."

With this valediction Miss Bell followed Norah into the taxicab, where she was timidly waiting for her, and the guest was gone.

"Father, did you ever expect Aunt Emily to want the hoydenish, hopeless Sylvia to visit her to influence her adopted child?" asked Sylvia, tucking her hand into her father's arm as usual on their way to the laboratory.

"I can't say, my dear, that I ever expected your aunt to adopt a child. That seems to me so amazing that you as an influence pale beside it," said Mr. Bell.

"Don't you see, Father, that Aunt Emily has loved the child's father all her life and has mourned his defection under the spell of the girl he married? Isn't it strange? Aunt Emily!" Sylvia said, thoughtfully.

"Surely I see that," Mr. Bell answered. "Yes, strange, perhaps, yet I don't know. Emily is not a person to change. Her emotions so turn inward

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that they are bound to strike their roots all through her. Be careful how you begin to love, my daughter!"

"I'm not one bit afraid of the love in me! And as to beginning, I'd have you know, Mr. Bell, that the man I adore I began to love—" Sylvia paused and made a rapid calculation—"seventeen years and nine months ago, to the best of my knowledge and belief!" she ended, triumphantly.

Mr. Bell shook his head with great melancholy.

"That's a long time, Miss Bell; nearly all your life! That would mean that you began this infatuation at the age of four months. I'm afraid, very seriously afraid, that you will never outlive your premature misfortune," he said.

"It wasn't premature; it was exactly on time! And it's the greatest luck, not a misfortune!" Sylvia cried, shaking her father's arm. "You're no good as a confidant! A confidant's business is to murmur: 'How sweet! How lovely! How fortunate!' every time there's a half pause in the story!"

Sylvia thought that she was going to have a chance to test her theory that afternoon. She had been to see Mrs. Leveritt, Ruth and Lloyd's lovely Aunt Helen, who had been a great comfort and help to the motherless girl in the days when she had been lonely, in spite of O'Malley's devotion, when he was her chief friend, and when the father, whom Sylvia worshipped afar, did not realize fully the existence

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of his baby girl as a young creature shooting up into womanhood.

Mrs. Leveritt had given Sylvia, as far as lay in her power, the woman's understanding sympathy, the counsel, the love that she lacked, supplying what Cassandra's devotion could not compass. Mrs. Leveritt was childless, and between the woman and the young girl, with their supplementary lack, there sprang up a deep and lasting attachment. Sylvia thought, rightly, that there were few such gracious women as she whom Sylvia called Aunt Helen, echoing Ruth and Lloyd, with a sense of kinship to her at least equal to theirs.

Sylvia had found Mrs. Leveritt alone, and she was glad of this, welcome as Ruth always was to her. Ruth and Lloyd were off with Sally Meade on some preliminary affair in connection with the Grecian Fête-to-be, which was engrossing Sally completely. Sylvia had told Mrs. Leveritt all about her luncheon at Mrs. Ritchie's, with its pitiable ending.

"Gerald showed truly fine, dear, but—try not to let pity sway you beyond its proper scope," Mrs. Leveritt warned her. "It's not a durable motive power if you let it turn in the wrong direction, or go too far."

"Aunt Helen, I know that!" cried Sylvia. "After I came home, and thought it over, it almost seemed—I hate conceited rash judgments, but it did almost seem as if that poor sick lady, nice as she is—she's very nice!—was——" Sylvia stopped.

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"Winding her weakness around you to draw you in?" Mrs. Leveritt ended her sentence for her. "Possibly. She knows that she must die—and leave Gerald. After all, it is pardonable in a mother to want to see her son safe and happy. But, Sylvia, I would not be swayed too far by pity. In the end it would not be kind to any one. My tall Sylvia would not be happy looking down; she is framed by nature to look up. Pity is always akin to condescension. You must admire the man you love, Sylvia; not be sorry for him—if the day ever comes at which we are hinting."

"I was sorry for Gerald, dreadfully sorry, but I did admire him heaps, Aunt Helen. He was so kind, so simple, so—so—nice. You can be sorry for a person you admire, you know. Oh, I don't *want* to think about these things, Aunt Helen. I'm as happy and contented as I can be with Father and O'Malley and my boat. Why can't people stay where they belong, play in their own yards?" cried Sylvia, impatiently.

"Let you remain Comrade Sylvia? Well, dear, one has to pay the penalty for all gain. People have a way of wanting to acquire what they see is desirable, whatever it may be—house, pictures, horses, yachts, cars—and Captain Sylvia! Never mind, lass, dear! If you don't want to let any one in to curtail your precious freedom, go your way serenely. There's no reason in the world why any one should intrude upon it." Mrs. Leveritt laughed as she

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spoke and kissed Sylvia good-bye, feeling sure that someone would one day alter her mind, and secretly cherishing the hope that it might be her nephew, Lloyd.

Sylvia, on her way home, heard a voice calling: "Miss Bell! Miss Bell! Oh, Captain Sylvia!"

She looked around and saw Jack Jarvis hastening after her. He waved his hand as she looked around, being hatless.

"Miss Bell, there's something I've got to tell you," said Jack, coming up.

"Me? About the fête?" asked Sylvia.

"What fête? Oh, that! The Greek Fake! I call it 'fake,' not 'fête'! Not bad, is it? I'd be willing to bet my dukedom that it'll be a fake, all right! Takes training and experience of the stage to get a whole lot of people to do a thing like that well. Take the one comparatively small matter of walking well on the stage; why it simply can't be done by amateurs! Dancing may go all right; that's dead easy comparatively, but walking, standing around, all that sort of thing; messy, by amateurs! Do you suppose these fellows and girls here will walk like Greeks?" Jack Jarvis waxed eloquent, and exhibited strong feeling.

"I've got to own up, Mr. Jarvis," said Sylvia, humbly, but dropping her lashes in the hope of veiling the laughter which she knew was in her eyes, "there's no use in my pretending! I never saw Greeks walking in all my life! I've seen them

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in Kandy Kitchens—spelled with a K, like 'Kalends'—but they were behind the counter. I've seen casts of the Parthenon frieze, but it doesn't give me much idea of how those people walked. So perhaps our audience won't be any wiser."

"You're a great jollier!" said Jack Jarvis, admiringly. "You're always on. I never met a girl any more thoroughly on than you are! And what I like about you—one of the things; there's no end of 'em!—is that you won't be on at all unless you like the subject. Say, I do wish you'd come down this winter to New York and let Peggy and me trot you out. I do wish it!"

"I'm grateful for my share of that wish; I don't know how your sister and New York would feel about it," laughed Sylvia. "You said you wanted to tell me something?"

"So I did," said Jack, who, after all, in spite of his metropolitan existence, was only a boy of twenty-one, and an honest, quite simple boy at that. "I've got quite a lot of money coming to me. Seems a beastly thing to say, but I wanted you to know."

"I did know it," said Sylvia. "It's a fine thing to have, if a person is able to get its value out of it."

"There you are!" cried Jack, admiringly. "I'm not. I've been over, over to England and on the Continent. They sent me over with a tutor when I was sixteen; I stayed two years. I wouldn't go to college. I don't care what they tell you about college frats and friendships and stuff, I can find all

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the friends I want, and frats—rot! When a fellow has it to spend he can get into clubs enough, and college is all tommyrot when you're not going in for study. Outside that, clubs'll do the trick, and save those four years. And I didn't care a whoop about the galleries, nor lots I saw on the other side. I liked some things, of course; they knew how to build, those old chaps; I'm quite nutty over Gothic cathedrals—for me, that is! What I was over for was to have been over, see? Get the polish *and* et cetera! Notice it on me? Well, what am I to do? I've got all I want to spend, and more than is good for me. I don't want to take my capital, and influential name, and go into business to make more! Low-down trick. Let the other fellow have a whack at it, I say! I wouldn't mind going in for some decent thing, but what I do is to enjoy myself. I like golf, and sort of harmless things, I guess, but if I had someone to steer me I'd sort of like jacking up poor beggars, or orphans, or anything."

He paused and looked anxiously at Sylvia, who found herself smiling at him with genuine liking for this artless autobiography, even while she was wondering why it was recited to her.

"Why don't you ask Ruth Hapgood to advise you? She's the girl with the big heart, and the sane brain to set you on your way. She's a lot more than the pretty little, charming little thing you see at first," said Sylvia.

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Jack Jarvis almost groaned.

"Say, Miss Bell, what makes you ring in Ruth Hapgood all the time?" he asked, despairingly. "Honest to goodness, it gives me the willies! I like to see girls stick up for each other, be pals and stand pat, and all that, but you know when you're talking to a girl about something—— well, don't you *see?*" Jack said, yielding finally to the despair.

Sylvia could not ignore his cry for mercy.

"But I was trying to think of the best way for you to find yourself, and Ruth—— Well, I won't, then!" she hastily interrupted herself, seeing Jack's protesting gesture. "Was this what you wanted to say? I don't quite see——"

"You will see when I've told you what I wanted to tell you. No; it wasn't about myself, or at least that part of myself. I wanted you to know that first, so when I told you what I was going to tell you, you'd be wise to the sort of fellow I am, so you'd know better how to regard me," said poor Jack, floundering. "What I had to tell you—to own up to—to confess——"

He stopped short.

"Yes," said Sylvia, impatiently, "those all mean about the same. You sound like 'Soule's English Synonyms.'"

"Gee, how can you guy me!" cried Jack, so sincerely that Sylvia was ashamed.

"Indeed I won't guy you! I never can help seeing things like that, but you are nice, and I

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do think so," Sylvia said, more kindly than discreetly.

"Oh, say!" gasped Jack, fervently. "You—you—Sylvia! What I had to tell you is that I know about your mule. There!"

"You know—about—my—*mule!*" exclaimed Sylvia, slowly. "My *mule?* What mule? I'm not acquainted with a single mule. I haven't so much as a horse, or a Ford. Only an Irish terrier!"

"Oh, say!" gasped poor Jack again. "It isn't a mule! I got mixed up with those bedroom things; all toes, no heels. It's a pump."

"Oh, my *pump!* My dancing pump!" cried Sylvia, enlightened, and in spite of her effort to keep sober, going off into a gale of laughter over her mistake. "What do you know about it? Find it?"

"No. I couldn't *find* it, because I stole it. I have it. I thought I had to own up," said Jack.

"You certainly had to!" said Sylvia, severely. "What a perfectly foolish thing to do! What good could a white silk dancing pump, my size, do you? Please return it. I've another pair now, of course, but please return that pump."

"I'd rather buy another pair," urged Jack. "You wouldn't ask what good it did me if I stood any chance with you. You'd see! Isn't there any hope for me, Sylvia?"

"It certainly doesn't sound hopeful, but you may come around in time, said Sylvia, really angry. "I don't know much about mental trouble but, to

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keep a pump, a silly silk *pump*—my goodness! Such feeble feeble-mindedness! Of course you mayn't buy another pair, and of course you must return it! Do you suppose I want one of my shoes wandering off by itself in your possession? Lloyd said that night——" Sylvia caught herself up, but Jack pounced on her.

"So Lloyd Hapgood was on!" he cried. "It's always that sticking-around Lloyd Hapgood! I'd like to take him out and show him some little dodges I learned to do when I was abroad. I'd whip him well! Oh, Sylvia, let me keep the pump, and you join it. I'll give you everything you ever could want! I'll, I'll—— I never saw your match, a patch on you! Sylvia, you did say you thought I was nice!"

"But I won't join any pump!" cried Sylvia. "Bring that shoe back, Jack Jarvis, as soon as you can get it. And be sensible, please. You are nice, but it isn't nice to want to beat up Lloyd, whom I've known this ever so long, and who is my good old chum. And it's still less nice to steal my shoe and pretend you're interested in it. Now, only think: A shoe! A mere white silk *pump*. Such lunacy! I do loathe nonsense! Brace up, Jack Jarvis, and then we'll be friends. As it is you're an object of charity, and that's not pleasant for you or me. You know I never in all my life have stood for sentimental philandering, so don't you try it! Nice boy, Jack Jarvis, but go home and *be* one!"

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"You talk like a kid!" said Jack, with wrath and considerable justice. "I'm past twenty-one. Do you suppose a fellow can fall in love with a girl and—and—stand everything? Do you suppose, Sylvia Bell, that nothing means anything?"

"I don't know one least thing about it, Jack Jarvis, and I'm not supposing! And if I talk like a kid, I suppose it's because I still am a kid, or at least I hope so. I'm five feet seven inches, and eighteen years old, but that's all of me that's grown up, and I'm clinging with both hands to my youthful teens. Run along home, and—and—— I don't mean to be nasty, Jack, and I'm sorry if you're sorry, for I do like you, especially this afternoon when I've got better acquainted with you. You'll be all right soon. Brace up! It's just as you said: you need something to occupy your mind. Sorry, Jack! I don't think it's my fault."

"No, it isn't," Jack admitted, dolefully. "You've never shown the least interest in me. But I've never known a girl like you, and you couldn't expect me not to go head over heels dippy over you. I'd like to show you to New York. Say, don't let this make any difference. I'll bring back the pump, and you come on down anyway; Peggy'll be as dippy over you as I am, in her way, and we'd give you the time of your life. And maybe, if you stopped being a kid, why, who knows? You'll stop sometime; you've got to grow up, you know."

Jack Jarvis wrung Sylvia's hand and turned

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sadly away. She continued down the beach to which she and Jack had walked to talk without interruptions.

"It does seem to me," thought Sylvia, walking so slowly that O'Malley sat down to let her get a start to allow him a chance to run, "that Jack Jarvis is quite a nice boy. The boys *are* nice, honest and earnest, and nice. Lloyd and Gerald, and now this one, all with a family resemblance, although they aren't one bit alike. I like them all three, and in the same way—of course not Jack like the two I've known. And it seems to me that Jack, for all he is silly, is nearer right than I am, and sees what I can't see. Which is curious, too, for I've read a hundred books for his one! Sylvia, my dear, if you were entirely truthful with yourself, you would admit that it isn't book larnin' that teaches!"

Which admission made to her own satisfaction, Sylvia delighted O'Malley by breaking into a run and racing him to Gabriel Gaby's shack.

"I brought my harmonica, Gabriel," Sylvia cried. "I'm going to sit here with you one hour by my wrist watch, which will barely get me home in time to get ready for dinner. I'm going to play to you, my Retired Seaman, till you think that the Lorelei has come up to sit on the end of this log beside you. It will be wonderful music to celebrate an event that marks my coming of age! To-day, Gabriel Gaby, I was promoted. I have assumed

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my *toga virilis*, or whatever is the girls' equivalent to that garment."

"Leetle mite touched by the sun, hey, Sylvie?" hinted Gabriel Gaby, significantly indicating his brow with his stubby forefinger. "'T has been warm. Maybe you know what you're alludin' to, Sylvie, but I'll be everlastingly keel-hauled 'f I do!"

Sylvia pulled her old harmonica out of her pocket, wiped it with her handkerchief, and blew a few notes from it as she had done, to the unbounded joy of Gabriel Gaby, when she was growing up and he had been her master in this plebeian art.

"I'm talking about what makes the world go 'round!" Sylvia said, deferring her performance to reply.

"They say it's love, but I notice my world kinder spins along, an' love hain't bothered me this long time," said Gabriel Gaby.

"Oh, Gabriel, how we do agree!" sighed Sylvia, and straightway fell to playing.

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CHAPTER XI

"To Help Him of His Blindness"

MR. BELL was called to the city by the necessities of his work the following morning, and Sylvia had a holiday.

She began it by getting up at an unlikely hour for a solitary sail, solitary except for O'Malley. However fond she was of her friends, Sylvia found little joy to compare with one of these early voyages in the swift little *Walloping Window Blind*, without any other human being to talk and be talked to, to make her conscious of another mind that might be affected differently from her own.

She settled down beside the tiller, stretched out with her feet braced against the centreboard casing, her disreputable hat pulled down over her eyes, her skirt comfortably hitched up across her knees, the sheet in her hand ready to be played out and hauled in as the fitful but strong breeze might demand it handled.

"Pretty nice, Charles O'Malley, my beloved," Sylvia suggested. "The wind is southwest." She thrust a forefinger into her mouth till it was warm and moist, and held it up to test the wind's direc-

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tion; it blew, of course, against the side that cooled first.

"Sou'west by sou', dog of the world." Sylvia announced the result to O'Malley, who politely wagged his tail in assent, but evinced no absorbing interest in the wind's direction. "That's a puffy wind, so you see I don't make fast the sheet, but hold it ready to play and preserve us alive, my Irish Dragoon. O'Malley, it's not half bad when we can get off by ourselves like this, is it? A box of fudge and you upon the bow—Omar Khayyam didn't get that quite right, did he?"

O'Malley, who had gone forward to his particular post beside the mast, could no longer sit quietly at the bow while Sylvia propounded questions to him and began to paraphrase Omar's Rubaiyat for him. He came aft whining and twisting himself, till, after Sylvia had petted him and explained that her conversation needed no replies, he went back to the bow and braced himself beside the mast again. Sylvia stood over across on a long tack, the wind on the quarter, sail tight hauled, then she made many short tacks and, by means of them, beat as far in the other direction, till she had covered seven miles, and it was time to come in.

"My fudge has *not* spoiled my appetite, doggums," observed Sylvia. "We are taught a great deal that we have to unlearn. You weren't! All the education I gave you was practical, and there's where you score over your teachers, who are brought

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up in superstition and not ignorance. Fudge before breakfast does *not* spoil my appetite, and Casabianca always said it would. I've got to go in and connect with rolls and coffee, and I hope a chop and raspberries. Norah is coming back tonight with her Roseleen; did you know that? Roseleen is fresh from Ireland, my dear. You're one of the rare Irishmen, born in this country, who haven't the least interest in the home of their fathers; you are wholly devoted to your native land. So you don't care about that, do you? Norah gives you tidbits, O'Malley; she says it's for your name, which was her mother's maiden name, so you should be interested in her return, though."

Once more O'Malley, catching reproach in Sylvia's voice, came aft, and this time he sat down to stay beside her, leaning heavily and inconveniently against her knee.

Gabriel Gaby was waiting to help Sylvia haul the tender of *The Walloping Widow Blind* up on the beach, and, also, to ask her a favour.

"Seen you go out, Sylvie, an' knew your father'd gone to Boston, an' sort o' made out you'd not be in the laboratory this mornin'," he greeted her. "Would you feel like patchin' me or have you another fish on your hook?"

Sylvia made it her business to mend her old friend's clothes. He had no one to do these services for him, and he was sixty-six years old. Sylvia was truly fond of the funny little ex-sailor, and

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took it upon herself to give him what comfort it lay in her power to give. He had taught her to sail and to row; had taken her fishing countless times when she was a child; had amused her with his philosophy as she grew older, and had entertained her with his stories and queer expressions all her life. Quietly Sylvia returned to him all that she had received, with interest.

"No, I have no particular fish on my hook, only a little one which I can throw off into the water," she said. "I'll be down, Gabriel, with my sewing kit."

"Pack up your thimble in your old kit bag," Gabriel Gaby hummed the words to the familiar air. "You're a good little craft, Sylvie, an' you sail well on any tack."

"I'll be down, Gabriel; about ten or so," Sylvia called back, acknowledging his compliment with a wave of her hand, running off toward the dune path as fast as she could.

At ten minutes after ten Sylvia, in a becoming pale blue chambray, with a deep fichu of dotted swiss and deep cuffs to match, bareheaded and trim, came speeding down the steep path from the dune, O'Malley after her, toward Gabriel Gaby, on the lookout for her.

"What's the patch to go on this time?" Sylvia asked, dropping down on the log, and getting out her sewing tools without loss of time, waiting to decide on the colour of her thread when she knew what she was to mend.

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"It's on the elber of my short coat," said Gabriel Gaby. "Wore clean through. An' you know, Sylvie, I ain't a scold, so it can't be from sharp elbers."

"No. More likely from wear," assented Sylvia. "You know that you've worn that coat since I was nine; I remember you had it when I had my ninth birthday, and even amputated elbows would wear out a coat, rubbing on one spot for nine years!" She threaded her needle with black silk, made a knot in the end, and laid the coat over her knee to adjust neatly the piece of cloth which Gabriel Gaby, frugal and methodical, had kept for all the time of the coat's existence to mend it when mending became necessary.

"Where's Lloyd Hapgood, Sylvie?" asked Gabriel, suddenly, as Sylvia bent frowningly over her work.

"Where?" cried Sylvia, quickly straightening herself. "Oh, you said: *Where* is Lloyd Hapgood; I thought you said: *There*. Why, he's all about, Gabriel; nowhere in particular; just as he always is."

"You ain't seein' him so much," said Gabriel.

"I'm not? Yes, I think I am; I don't know," said Sylvia, honestly. "He's always to be seen. Perhaps he hasn't been visible so often lately; I hadn't thought about it."

"Better think about it, Sylvie," advised Gabriel Gaby. "There's a sight of young chaps can swing a cane more nobby, an' cut a wider swathe with,

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or without that cane, mebbe, than Lloyd kin, but when it comes to an anchor that'll hold, Lloyd's it."

"Right you are, Gabriel," Sylvia heartily endorsed him. "But it wouldn't occur to me to label him. Lloyd is—— Why, he's Lloyd! Just that, and just there! You take him for granted much as you do the lower light out yonder."

"I suppose a girl of eighteen hain't lived long enough, nor seen enough of what kind o' things people can turn themselves into, to know the full valyer of what you've just said, Sylvie. It's all true, every word, an' just what it stands fer you can't begin to realize," said Gabriel Gaby, impressively.

"I suppose that may be, but I realize a little bit," said Sylvia with a warm smile for Gabriel's praise of Lloyd. "If I don't see much of him just now, still I see him a good deal, and I'll never be any less glad to see him. You nice Gabriel Gaby, to defend him, if he needed defence. But he doesn't!"

"Better not let any one supersede Lloyd with you, Sylvie; cut him out, in plain language. Know what Shakespeare said? 'The friends thou hast, an' their adoption tried, grapple 'em to thy soul with hooks of steel'. 'Hamlet'; I see that acted once by Edwin Booth, when I wasn't much more'n a boy, an' I read it after. Good advice, too, though it was a queer kind of duffer, called Polly-onius,

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gave it. He got stabbed, stuck like a pin-cushion shortly after, but he had sense in what he told his son." Gabriel Gaby endorsed Shakespeare with a solemn shake of his head.

"Gabriel, dear, what has set you off?" cried Sylvia. "Lloyd is Lloyd; haven't I said so? And that covers it! There's nothing wrong between us. Gabriel, who is that girl I see down the beach? I don't know her."

"That," said Gabriel Gaby, "is Allimetta, Allimetta Briggs."

"Never!" cried Sylvia. "Oh, Gabriel, do you know her? And can you get her here without letting her know I wanted her?"

"Why, I don't just see how. Nor do I know what you want o' her; she's a kind o' a goin'-along creature," said Gabriel Gaby, frowning perplexedly at Sylvia.

"That's what I want of her. To persuade her to go along," laughed Sylvia. "She is breaking a devoted heart, and I promised, if ever I met her, to urge her to be merciful."

"Enos Coffin!" exclaimed Gabriel, at once understanding. "He's no better'n what she is, Sylvie; what's the odds? They won't be happy, anyway. Wasn't I married, an' am I such a clam as Enos? An' I assure you Mrs. Gaby wa'n't like Allimetta."

"She was too energetic, I understood from what you told me. Maybe two people who are rather limp may be more *simpatica*, Gabriel. Anyway,

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they'll think they're happy and that's all that matters," said philosophic Sylvia. "Can you get her?"

"She's turnin' this way now. She was comin' to see if I'd sail her an' some friends o' hers over to Baytide, supposin' she could get a boat. I guess she's set out for here, but Allimetta wouldn't sail straight, free o' the wind, 'f she could tack; that's Allimetta's build," said Gabriel.

Sylvia sewed in silence, hemming down her neat patch on the sleeve of Gabriel's coat, and watching Allimetta Briggs's slow approach.

When she was near Sylvia's task was done; she held up the coat for Gabriel Gaby to admire.

"Fit for a retired seaman?" Sylvia asked.

"Fit for a retired admiral of the fleet, Captain Sylvie!" returned Gabriel. "You are what I'd call a soarin' sewer! An' to think Cassandra Billings was worried green not so awful long ago, fearin' you'd grow up so's t' not be able to thread a needle, hardly!"

Allimetta Briggs by this time was within speaking distance. She was a lackadaisical-looking girl, with a kind of helpless prettiness about her common little thin face, and she was wonderfully dressed in a cotton pongee-like material embroidered in many colours in "lazy-daisy stitch," with a deep collar of imitation lace of an emphatic pattern, surmounted by a large satin hat, with immense flat flowers of three colours applied along the brim.

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"Make you acquainted with Miss Sylvia Bell, Allimetta; Miss Briggs, Miss Bell." Gabriel Gaby made the presentation, rising and putting his heels together in the first position, evidently feeling that some formal attitude was demanded of him.

"Miss Bell of the Bell mansion?" asked Allimetta, elegantly. "Delighted to see you. I've heard tell a lot of you, how you sail, an' everything."

"And I've heard of you!" cried Sylvia, with immense enthusiasm, throwing warmth into a voice that always charmed with its quality, at once ringing and soft. "I know someone who thinks there's no one in all the world comparable to Miss Allimetta Briggs!"

It is a foregone conclusion that a correct pronunciation and English construction, uttered in a cultivated voice, will have one of two effects upon people of Allimetta's sort. Either it will stir them to envious wrath, resistance to superiority, or it will impress them and tend to make them ready to follow where that superior leads. Fortunately for Sylvia's success, Allimetta was of the latter sort. Instantly she recognized that Sylvia was greeting her in a way that she could never hope to attain, and she regarded her admiringly.

"I expect it's a gentleman friend of mine," she said, simpering.

"Yes, Mr. Coffin," cried Sylvia. "Long ago, when I was fifteen, and my chum here, O'Malley, the terrier, was quite young, the dog was badly cut

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and Mr. Coffin took him—me, too!—home in his cart. So I've never forgotten that I owe Mr. Coffin a debt of gratitude which I cannot, or have not had a chance so far, to repay."

"He told me about that," said Allimetta. "He and I was asked once to look on at a hop to the hotel, an' you was dancin'; then he tole me. Him an' me kep' steady comp'ny at that time."

"Oh, yes, I know!" Sylvia's sympathy was profound. "And now you are separated! It is very sad. Mr. Coffin had an errand at my father's house lately and he told me that you were not going to be married. He showed me the perfectly wonderful ring that he bought for your engagement. It is so painfully sad to be separated! Miss Briggs, why, oh, why won't you be kind to poor, heart-broken Mr. Coffin?"

"Honest? Do you think I'd oughter make up?" cried Allimetta. "Well, if a young lady like you says he's the thing—I don't care! I don't mind! To be sure I had another plan. There was a butcher; him and me rode out in the delivery truck Sundays; it was kinder nice. But I don't know—I don't care if I do marry Enos! But how'd I fix it up? A perfect lady don't never tip a feller off she's ready, does she?"

"Dear me, no; she doesn't!" cried Sylvia, grateful to herself for smothering a laugh. "I'll see that Mr. Coffin understands. Will you be ready if he comes to-morrow, or the next evening? Ready

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for him to put that marvellous ring back on your finger?"

Allimetta hung her head in a blushing attitude, although she did not blush.

"I'll say it's some ring!" she admitted. "Yes, Miss Bell, you can send him, if you want to."

"And now I must go home," said Sylvia, throwing upon the crimson and suffering Gabriel Gaby a look that nearly upset his heroic efforts to hold back laughter. "So glad you happened along, Miss Briggs! It's a great thing to feel that one has made love less blind."

"Say, ain't she elegant?" cried Allimetta, as Sylvia started away, and almost at once broke into a run which Gabriel Gaby correctly interpreted as flight to get where she could laugh her fill. "'F anybody was to ask me what I called a perfect lady I'd stick my finger—all my finger's far's that goes!—right out at Miss Sylvia Bell."

Ruth sat on the piazza when Sylvia reached her home, and beside her on a chair was a package, opened, containing a box, and in that box was Sylvia's lost white silk pump, now haloed with Romance.

"Oh, Ruth!" exclaimed Sylvia, stopping short with such a look of dismay that Ruth, jumping up to greet her, stepped back, shocked that Sylvia seemed sorry to see her.

"Anything wrong?" Ruth asked. "Don't you want me?"

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"I always want you," said Sylvia, "and you know it. But—did he give that to you to bring to me?"

"Is that all?" cried sharp little Ruth, instantly guessing what was in Sylvia's mind. "No, he did not. If he had I'd not have opened it! It was here when I came; Cassie had it undone, and was holding an indignation meeting over it all by herself. She admitted me to the meeting, said he ought to be ashamed of himself, and wondered if they had no idea in New York of what was nice and respectful, not to say sensible. Sylvia, evidently you knew about that pump. Aren't you going to tell your best friend?"

"I didn't know till yesterday, Ruth. Yes, I did know then. Lloyd guessed right. But, Ruth, it's just a boy's sentimentality; it's really nothing. He'll forget all about it in a minute. It was you he was attracted to first, and that's what counts. He probably sort of noticed me because I was new—they do, you know—and so tall. But he admires you and I can see he likes you." Sylvia spoke eagerly, selecting her words carefully, not sure whether there might be in little Ruth some hurt pride in being passed over for Sylvia, half fearing that Ruth might have been attracted by Jack Jarvis.

"It doesn't seem one bit so, but you never can tell," thought Sylvia, anxiously.

Ruth looked at Sylvia with an inscrutable ex-

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pression, that she tried to make sober. "Sylvia, he has discarded me completely and you know it, so why try to gloss it over? I love you well enough not to grudge you anything; I don't blame him one bit for liking you better And, if you do learn to care for him, think what you can do as the mistress of all that wealth!" she said, pensively.

"Oh, Ruth, dear Ruth, it isn't more than a passing fancy. Learn to care for him? He's a nice boy; I'd learn to love him if you loved him and he loved you, but not in the way you mean," cried Sylvia, eagerly. "And it's silly for you to think he really likes me, Ruth; all that he longs for is to show me New York. He said so over and over."

"Doesn't that mean everything? Doesn't he want to give you the best he knows, and isn't New York the best thing in the world to him?" demanded Ruth, sadly. But she could not keep it up. With a scream of laughter she threw herself on Sylvia and hugged her, laughing till she sobbed.

"Oh, Sylvia, I never dreamed you could be so foolish, so funny," she gasped. "You were afraid I cared and you've tiptoed around my dying bed! Dying of a broken heart! Not your small Ruth! Sylvia, Sylvia, it *is* funny! Why, you dear goose, you're welcome to all the Jack Jarvises there are from the Battery to the Bronx, or you would be if I didn't want you to do something worlds nicer than to marry him! Jarvis wealth, Jarvis power, Jarvis social position"—Ruth waved her hands.

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"Not a bit do I care, Sylvia, and it's been the funniest thing in ages! Lloyd and I knew that night Jackie had purloined your pump. What else could have happened to it? It made Lloyd mad, but I loved it. Do you know, Sylvia, clever as you are and with your dear old regal head crammed with booklore, I often see quicker and farther, and understand some things better than you do?"

"I believe that is true, Ruthie," admitted Sylvia. "I think in some ways, and for eighteen years old, I'm quite stupid and crude."

"Well, I wouldn't use those adjectives, but you do go your way something like Una. I never read Spenser, but we got that in literature lectures. She had other things to think of, wasn't interested in young men," said Ruth, finding herself uncertain of her ground.

"That's not it!" cried Sylvia. "I'm not one bit like Una, unless it was that she had a lion chum and I have an Irish terrier. Then you don't mind, not the least bit, that Jack Jarvis switched over and fancied that he wanted my pump, not yours? Not the least bit, small Ruthie?"

For answer Ruth danced Sylvia down the length of the piazza, and Sylvia, infected at last by Ruth's glee over the whole episode, danced her back again, almost spinning the little maid off her feet.

After which, half breathless, they stopped and hugged each other, laughing like the children that they had been such a little while before.

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Then Sylvia pulled herself together, but instantly began to laugh again.

"Oh, Ruthie, do you remember in 'An Old-Fashioned Girl' that it says: 'Polly held her close'—that's Fanny Shaw, you know!—'saying in that tender voice of hers: "I didn't mean to let a lover part this pair of friends, if I could help it?"' When I was about ten I thought that was the most glorious, touching speech, perfectly scrumptious; didn't you? I could almost recite every word of that book, and of 'Little Women.' And do you know, that's been ringing in my ears these past weeks, and I've been feeling rather fine and lovely, acting Polly toward you! Isn't that too delicious? I nearly quoted it to Jack Jarvis, altering the sentence to suit, of course, when I remembered in time that it wouldn't do to hint to him you were in love with him!"

"Well, rather not!" cried Ruth. "Sylvia, doesn't that prove you're only a little girl? It didn't mean one thing to you, but acting out a story."

"That's true," said Sylvia, despondently, as if oppressed by her deficiency. Then she cheered up. "But, Ruth, what could it mean when it didn't mean anything?" she cried, and they both began to dance and to laugh all over again with the joy of this absurdity.

"I've got to go, Captain Sylvia, my darling," said Ruth, who seemed happy over Sylvia's frustrated romance, for some reason.

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"I'm going up to straighten my hair; it's shaken almost down with our romping."

The girls ran up to Sylvia's room where Ruth made herself tidy for her walk back to Mrs. Leveritt's.

Sylvia and she halted a moment at the top of the steps before Ruth went down them.

"I'll have Norah's young Roseleen on my hands to-night, by the last train," said Sylvia. "I don't suppose she'll be on my hands, but Norah is to bring her here to stay till we can decide what's to be done with her. And, Ruthie, please tell Lloyd I've got to go over to North Paxton to find that Enos Coffin to-morrow, and ask him if he'd like the honour of driving me over in *Gwendolen?*"

"I can answer for that, and for that matter, so can you! I'll tell him," said Ruth, at last departing.

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CHAPTER XII

"And Being Helped—"

MISS SYLVIA BELL: At Home?" Mr. Bell remarked, inquiringly, putting out his hand to draw nearer to his the chair that Sylvia was preparing to use on the piazza after tea.

"Yes, Father. Miss Bell is at home this evening, but not in the sense of receiving. Why, yes, she is, too," Sylvia added, discovering that this was precisely what she was doing.

"Norah is coming back to-night. She will bring her sister, just landed. Roseleen is fifteen, and I don't know what Norah will do with her. I thought I ought to be here when they come to set the girl at ease, make Norah comfortable in her mind, besides. I told Cassie that Norah might keep Roseleen with her here till we could find out where she would fit in the new land. Cassie is really kind, but she does detest innovations! She agreed with me that we ought to help Norah with the youngster, but she would be glad to help her at longer range, if there were a way to it."

Mr. Bell looked with great pride at his girl, though Sylvia, her eyes fastened on the brilliant west, did

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not see it. Only three years ago she had been a "youngster" of fifteen herself, and one that it seemed impossible ever to get interested in domestic affairs, one whose utter contempt for a needle tried conscientious Cassandra's soul, vainly struggling to train the girl into fitness for womanhood. And now! Not merely skilful with the once-despised needle, competent to do much delicious cooking, a gracious young head of her father's house, but taking responsibility for the welfare of this little immigrant, betraying the sweet womanliness whose first divine instinct is to protect and help.

"Beautifully right, Sylvia!" her father approved her. "Norah is a good, faithful girl, and if Providence had made Sylvia Roseleen, and Roseleen Sylvia, I should be glad, in my grave, that Sylvia was fallen among friends in a strange land."

"Father, you nice thing!" cried Sylvia, swinging around to face him. "You understand so much that is quite different from lab. things! That's precisely it! I always wonder that people don't see it. I was born with all sorts of advantages back of me, but I might not have been, and I didn't give them to myself. Doesn't it seem obvious that advantages are a debt to be paid to any one coming along with a lean bank account, in the coin in which you are rich?"

"I would say, dear, that the greatest advantage of all was to be born with a soul capable of recognizing that stupendous truth and to have been taught it,"

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said Mr. Bell. "You are a happy child, tall little daughter!"

"Mercy, yes, Father!" cried Sylvia. "I'm so happy that I try to be afraid; everybody says that it's dangerous to be too happy! But I can't manage it. And it's ungrateful not to get every least drop of it, don't you think? So I go on from day to day getting a little happier, like the Aged Man a-sitting on the gate, only he was 'thinking of a way to get a little fatter'! And come to think of it, it wasn't the Aged Man at all, but the other man telling us about him."

"Sylvia, I think it's because you are mildly insane that you are safe to enjoy your happiness to the full! The fates and furies probably go around the feeble-minded without molesting them. What can you be talking about? What Aged Man, and who told you about him? Sounds like a quotation," cried Mr. Bell.

"Oh, you poor, poor little Clement Bell! What a shame! Did they 'buse him when he was little and couldn't 'buse back! Didn't you have 'Through the Looking Glass' when you were a little chap? In a land teeming with societies of all sorts of initials to prevent all sorts of cruelties? Why didn't Aunt Emily get you 'Alice Through the Looking Glass' instead of the kilts she told me she made you?" Sylvia cried with mock passionate pity.

"Of course I had it! Both the 'Alice' books, but I didn't recognize your allusion," Mr. Bell

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reassured her. "How could I know what I do about changes in the laboratory specimens if I hadn't read 'Alice'?"

"Qualified!" cried Sylvia, gleefully. "You've qualified as an Alician. That was a lovely proof of it. Father, do you see what a sunset we're having out here, all by ourselves, with nobody else to get one tiny fadedest-edge tint of it?"

"I do," said Mr. Bell. "And that without the least desire to share it. Sylvia, I was remembering how your mother and I sat just here and watched the sunsets in the half summer and one whole one that she was here with me. We were married early in July. We came to take possession of this house in August. A year from the following June, when you were a week old, you know, she left me. I did not expect to be happy again; the most I hoped for was to learn to bear a loss so great. You are the miracle-worker, dear; I am happy, profoundly happy with you."

"Yes, I think that is true, Father-mine," said Sylvia, softly. "When people tell me I'm a lucky girl and tell me why I am, that I'm pretty, or tall, or can make friends, or sail, or play the piano, or sew, I smile inside myself and think they don't know one thing about it. I *am* happy, but not for any of those reasons. Because you are happy, and such a dear that you let me make you so."

Mr. Bell patted her hand, saying:

"Your mother was a little creature, not two inches

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above five feet tall, but in spite of that, and your resemblance to me, I see her in you at every turn. You have her nature, and you curiously reproduce her small gestures, little mannerisms. It is wonderful to me, when she left you, a meaningless little roll of flannel, and you have never known her. I am thankful that she endowed you with so much of herself before she went away. She was constantly occupied with my happiness. It is like her to have given me the best daughter a man could have, with a great deal of her sweet self in her, to make me happy in her stead."

"Father, you make me feel as if I were part of that sunset, shining with glory!" Sylvia laughed in order not to cry, but there was a catch in her voice. "You know it was because I wanted to be a wee bit of good to you that I began to learn to do things: cook, sew, and play for you, all that. I suppose I'd have been no more good than a floating piece of seaweed if I hadn't wanted to be your comrade Sylvia. And I see Norah and a girl with her, so there's the end of our confab till the stars are out. The other girl—young Roseleen—is taller than Norah!"

Sylvia was as much interested in the coming of this fifteen-year-old maid as if she had been a guest at one of the hotels, instead of Norah's sister, Roseleen Leary, the immigrant. But Sylvia managed to be interested in everything and everybody, with a vitality in her interest that was, in many of the cases, amazing to her friends. Sally Meade had expressed

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this wonder in this connection, the coming of Norah's sister, but Sylvia had silenced her, without lessening the wonder, by saying:

"Roseleen is just a girl, and exceedingly pretty, Norah says, and Norah is a nice girl. Why should I be interested in Maida Clayton, because she lives at High Tide, and not in Roseleen, because she doesn't yet live anywhere? Of course I'm interested in a pretty, nice young girl!"

"It will end in short hair, spectacles, and a Social Settlement," groaned Sally, with pretended horror, but she knew that it never would, and that Sylvia's kindness was far and away from the scientific, dry bones of modern philanthropy.

"This is your Roseleen, isn't it, Norah?" said Sylvia, going to the head of the steps and intercepting Norah as she turned toward the side door.

"Roseleen, I hope you're not too tired from sailing and sailing? I never get tired of it myself."

"No, miss. I'm well, thank you, miss," said Roseleen, her head tipped to one side, her lids covering her shy eyes.

She was as pretty as Norah had called her; Sylvia thought that she might easily be "the prettiest girl in County Cork," unless Cork were richer in beauty than most counties, anywhere. Roseleen's tinting was delicacy itself, yet it managed to have warmth, not the coldness of extreme delicacy. Her eyes were soft, pensive, yet half laughing, hazel brown in colour; her dark hair grew in ripples around her brow,

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making "the widow's peak" in the middle of her forehead which added greatly to its charm.

"You must be perfectly happy over here," Sylvia warned the girl. "We'll ship you away, perhaps to Australia, if you aren't."

"Yes, miss," said Roseleen, but she smiled, a tiny smile.

"I'll just step in an' leave me bag, if you please, Miss Sylvia, then I'll take Roseleen to the clean, decent place I found for her, down in the village. I'll not be long, miss, keepin' the house open."

"Norah, this is a clean, decent place for Roseleen," laughed Sylvia. "I've known it all my life and it's perfectly clean, and I think Roseleen would rather be with you. Won't you keep her with you till you decide what she's to do with her little self? She can share your room, and not bother any one a bit more than would a little green mouse in the wall. Do you have green mice in Ireland, Roseleen?"

"No, miss," said Roseleen, but the look that she gave Sylvia was eloquent enough to make up for the deficiencies of her tongue.

Norah cried out joyfully: "Oh, Miss Sylvia, sure it's not the Irish alone that has kind hearts, though often they do be thinkin' it! Could you but know how frightened this poor child was to be goin' out to sleep without me in a strange land! But I says to her: 'Roseleen, it's yourself, an' not Norah, you must be leanin' on, an' the sooner you begin it the sooner you'll get strong for it.' But if you don't mind my

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keepin' her, Miss Sylvia, I'll be thankful to risk her stayin' weak awhile longer, just till she gets used to the skies above her, an' the way the voices sound on this side. Roseleen, have you no word to thank Miss Sylvia, who's been your good angel from the start of your comin', an' before I'd sent your passage money?"

"I'm that thankful, miss, I can't be sayin' it," said Roseleen, faintly.

"Never mind saying it, Roseleen. The best thanks aren't said, but show themselves a little bit at a time. It isn't the least trouble to have you. Cassandra will fill you up with American instructions if you're here a few days," Sylvia said.

Norah permitted herself a small twinkle of understanding with her youthful mistress.

"Cassandra would have made a fine, competent girl of me by now, had it been in me, Miss Sylvia. Maybe Roseleen will not be the stupid one I am," she said.

"Cassandra has a cozy hot supper awaiting you two girls," said Sylvia, repenting her trifling lapse to Norah that recognized Cassandra's tendency to train up everybody in the way they should go. "She's always kind, though she hates to make a fuss about it. Then get a long night's sleep, and have Roseleen rested to get acquainted with Paxton early in the morning."

"Would there be larks here, miss? In Ireland the larks do be out early," said Roseleen, unexpectedly.

"Often there are larks here quite late at night,

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Roseleen," Sylvia assured her, as she rejoined her father.

Immediately after lunch the next day Lloyd appeared at the Bell gate in *Gwendolen*. *Gwendolen* was plainly just out from a bath; she shone resplendent in mudless wheels, dustless top, freshly polished brass and sides.

Lloyd ran up the steps and called Sylvia, who came out in a white skirt and waist, hatless, and pretended great surprise at seeing Lloyd.

"Why, Lloyd, how nice! What brought you here?" she exclaimed.

Lloyd looked at her sharply, then he grinned.

"Come off! Climb down! Dismount, Tink," he said. "I'm on. Didn't you tell Ruth to send me around to bury you, or something like that—take you to a Coffin?"

"Poor joke! Frightfully poor joke, Lloyd!" Sylvia frowned at him. "I believe I did ask Ruth to tell you that I'd let you take me to North Paxton, if you wanted to almost beyond endurance, but how could I be sure you'd come?"

"*That*'s a poor joke, if you're talking of poor ones!" said Lloyd. "Get your hat, Tink, or come without it, if you like, but don't leave the Lady Gwendolen down there eating her heart out—drinking her own gas—in mad longing to get you in her midst."

"I shall wear a hat," said Sylvia with dignity. "I shall even wear a new hat, a lovely close-fitting thing that I made myself, all of shirred silk with tiny

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buds around the face, in a flat, bewitching encircling wreath. I'm describing it for you, Lloyd, because when I appear with it on you are expected to be so blinded with admiration that you won't be able to distinguish its details."

"Humph!" grunted Lloyd. "Mixing me up with Jarvis, aren't you? I've seen you often enough to stand up under a small new hat!"

Sylvia turned away with splendid disdain and sauntered upstairs, taking as much time as possible in going. But she must have moved more quickly in her own room, for she was down again and out to *Gwendolen* in so short a time as to satisfy even Lloyd's impatience.

The Lady Gwendolen was "feeling particularly fit," as Lloyd remarked. Her yellow wheels spun at a good rate of speed, and Lloyd "gave her more gas," with much satisfaction in her behaviour.

"I like this car," observed Sylvia, as she had often done before. "Take it all around, it's the one I'd rather have. Maybe I shall get one next year. Father will take lab. easier, so he promises me, after the Experiment—with a capital E—is done, and it wouldn't be half bad to drive him along the shore, all the way down to Maine. Yet, on the other hand, I want him to take me abroad."

"Say, Sylvia!" Lloyd's tone was seriously remonstrant. "Don't do that! Don't go over yet. I'll be graduated in two years more, then I'll go. Wait, and make it a family party."

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"By that time you'll have other fish to fry, or else you'll be eager to make your start in life. And, besides," Sylvia hastily went on, seeing Lloyd about to interrupt, and not caring to hear what he might want to say, "I'm not used to any family but my one, solitary father, and I don't want to adopt encumbrances, thanks."

"Encumbrances!" echoed Lloyd. "A fat lot I've ever encumbered you, Tinker Bell! You need me, and it's pretty near time that you recognized that little fact."

"I never thought you were conceited," mused Sylvia in a meditative tone, "but yet I knew you were subject to human weaknesses, so why not conceit? Still, it is rather a shock. If you sincerely think that I need you, Lloyd, then how do you account for your deserting me lately? It would seem unkind. Not that I'm sure that you have deserted me; I hadn't noticed it, but Gabriel Gaby said you hadn't been around with me as usual," Sylvia added, hastily.

"Speaking of unkindness," said Lloyd in a general way and to the passing breeze. "You hadn't noticed that I hadn't been around? Certainly I hadn't been around. Do you think I am going to submit to competition with rank outsiders? Fellows you hardly know, when I'm your tried and trusted?"

"T. and T.," mused Sylvia aloud. "*American* T. and T.? I read the market reports to Father sometimes, and I know that stock. You are tried, I'll

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admit, but trials are good for the soul, and—yes; I do trust you. But as to competition, I haven't noticed any, and 'fellows I hardly know' there aren't. One—Jack Jarvis—but he's not in your class, Lloyd, T. and T."

"Ritchie?" hinted Lloyd.

To her annoyance Sylvia felt herself blush.

"A Paxton boy who used to be good to me when I was a reckless little girl," she said. "Do you call that hardly knowing him? I know Gerald, and I like him a lot, so, Lloyd, what's the use? You like him, too."

"He's fine," said Lloyd, unwillingly, but honestly. "Sylvia, it all began with fooling, but, truthfully, I hate this summer and all the mixing-up! It's next to impossible to have one of our good old times. I wish it was we three again—Ruth and you and I—and I could get on without Ruth!" Lloyd laughed ruefully but he looked more rueful than laughing.

"The ravages of time, Lloyd," said Sylvia. "It was fun to be kids, but that is understood to be—like the London firms—Limited! I'm having fun still, and not such different fun. I think you can be eighteen and not allow your brow to become furrowed, your damask cheek wrinkled with care. You keep on playing, don't think about things—that's my rule."

"How in the name of sense are you going to keep from thinking of anything that you want like blazes?" broke out Lloyd. Then he bent over and

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wrenched *Gwendolen's* gears back and forth viciously though the little roadster was behaving her best.

"Don't want anything; I don't!" cried Sylvia, lightly, and managing a gay little laugh as successfully as if her heart were not beating violently with fear of what Lloyd might say next. "Funny old Lloyd! You always did bother a lot about nothing, in spite of your steady way of going along. It's such a comfort to have a reliable brotherly chum to bank on, Lloyd dear, especially to an unrelated girl like me! I'm anxious to hear how Aunt Emily gets on with her adopted Emily, by the way. I suppose that child will be brought up to call me Cousin Sylvia!"

Lloyd straightened himself and threw Sylvia a look that told her that he understood her rapid, desultory remarks, but he accepted the rôle that she assigned to him.

"Why are you going over to hunt Enos Coffin, Tink?" he asked, ignoring her praise of his fraternal qualities, which did not strongly appeal to him.

"To tell him to go to his Allimetta and give her once more that 'marked-keys' ring which she returned," cried Sylvia. "I saw the lady, Lloyd. I had no difficulty in persuading her that Enos was the man. But I think that she had had a butcher in her eye that, for some reason, stayed all in her eye—if you'll forgive me for putting it that way. It's in the Allimetta key! So she was ready to listen to my mission."

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"My aunt!" exclaimed Lloyd, with a shout of laughter, as if he had nothing on his mind but a boy's enjoyment of the story. "Seems to me you're taking a big risk, making that sort of a match!"

"That's what Gabriel Gaby seemed to think," said Sylvia. "I met Allimetta at his shack; he introduced us. But it's wise to combine people of that sort: suppose another sort of woman married Enos, or a nice man married Allimetta! In union there is strength, and that's what they both need."

"Well, there's the house, and I hope your punishment may be light!" said Lloyd, bearing down on the small Coffin house.

"Mr. Coffin," said Sylvia, as Enos loped out to salute her, "I have great and glorious news for you! I have met the enemy—I mean your friend—and she is yours!"

"Miss Bell, oh, Miss Bell! Do you mean Allimetta? Say, honest to Pete, do you mean Allimetta?" gasped Enos, almost overcome.

"Honest to Enos, I do!" cried Sylvia, gleefully. "I had a little talk with her, and she told me that I might send you to her with the 'marked-keys' ring, and she will accept you both!"

Enos turned, and dropped his head down on the gate post, sobbing.

"I can't hardly believe it; I can't," he whimpered. "Miss Bell, what have you done? What have you done? I'm bustin' with gratitood. You'd ought to have a statute in the public square, that's what

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you had ought to have! I'll thank you some day when I get myself together, so to speak."

"You need never thank me," said Sylvia. "I don't think the credit is mine. I think Miss Briggs had missed you."

Lloyd drove away, choosing a road that would take them farther from home before he turned to go thither.

"I don't know that it's so awfully funny after all," said Lloyd, his face sober.

"Nor I," Sylvia admitted. "It's an honour to human nature, isn't it, Lloyd, that the funniest expression of feeling, even a funny sort of sentiment, takes on dignity when it's sincere? I was rather ashamed that I had laughed at poor Enos, and had pleaded his cause as a little lark."

"Oh, but you meant it kindly all the while," said Lloyd, with conviction. "You have an easy-going way of always wanting to straighten people up, and to make them happy."

"It's so horrid to be unhappy!" Sylvia indirectly admitted the accusation. "I never had to try it long; I was sometimes unhappy, in spite of the fun I had, till three years ago, but I'm such a happy creature, and so lucky, that I hate like everything to see anybody losing one day, crawling around with a heavy heart."

"Didn't Shakespeare ask if Sylvia was 'kind as she was fair'? And didn't the song go on to say something about her helping something or other?"

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Lloyd would not speak of "love being helped," but he smiled at Sylvia with real, unselfish affection. "You help lots, Tinker Bell!"

"You're a trump, old Lloyd!" said Sylvia, emphatically.

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CHAPTER XIII

"—Inhabits There"

YOUNG Roseleen, under training to be useful in ways suitable to her capacity, had brought in the morning mail and laid it on the breakfast table. There were several letters for Mr. Bell, only one for Sylvia.

Her father, having rapidly disposed of his own, looked across to see Sylvia still reading her single one, smiling, but drawing her delicate eyebrows together over it.

"You have not a heavy mail for a young person who is supposed to be a belle—Sylvia, really, you must take my word for it! I did not mean that for a pun! I had the final e in my mind when I said it, and no ulterior design!" Mr. Bell hastily defended himself from Sylvia's accusing look.

"That's a comfort!" Sylvia cried. "You know, Father, if I were a belle at all, it could be only in Paxton, since I am not often away from home, and with a telephone in the house there's nothing to write me about. This is from Aunt Emily. For such a distinct lady she writes a fearfully indistinct hand! It always puzzles me. She is delighted with her little Emily! Isn't that good?"

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"I only hope that the child will be delighted with her," said Mr. Bell. "I can't see Emily giving a child that wise admixture of discipline and spoiling that all children need to be happy and good."

"Don't you think it will be different with this child? Aunt Emily loved her father and expected to marry him. I'd think that would make her treat little Emily Anstruther quite differently from any other child; named for Aunt Emily, too!" Sylvia spoke with her eyes on her aunt's letter, and did not see her father's surprised look that Sylvia remembered and understood what he had forgotten.

"She says that she is letting the little girl have a garden of her own, and a house in a tree; the carpenter put it up for her, and that she tries not to see how frightfully dirty she gets. She also says that the child looks far stronger, has a better colour than when she came to her, and sings all day long. It seems that the other day Emily thanked Aunt Emily enthusiastically for the good times which she was letting her have, and Aunt Emily told her that she had never run wild when she was a little girl, and that she disliked seeing little girls hoydenish, but that she had 'promised her cousin Sylvia to let her romp, and would keep her word, and when Cousin Sylvia came to see her next winter it was she that Emily must thank for her good times', that she 'would be satisfied if Emily grew up to be like Cousin Sylvia.' It may be that I've only one letter, Father Bell, but that one is equal to a whole

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volume, several volumes! It is a History of Our Own Times, and The Triumph of the Modern Girl, and An Authentic Account of the Conversion of Miss Emily Bell—more, too! Oh, the telephone! Maybe it's for me!"

Sylvia sprang up to answer the call as her father said:

"It's more than merely 'maybe'! I'm rarely called."

"All right, Sally! . . . Yes, at two. I know; I'll go! I wondered why we weren't beginning. Good-bye," Sylvia replied from her end of the wire.

"First call to a general rehearsal of the Greek Fête, this afternoon," she explained to her father. "I don't know, either; maybe it's a rehearsal of the solo dances. Oh, I don't know! Anyway, it's a rehearsal, so watch me in the lab., Father; I may practise with your starfish while I'm holding them up to make them drop off a leg!"

"Sylvia Bell," Sally Meade began in the middle of things, clutching Sylvia when she arrived at the Meade house for the rehearsal that afternoon, "we've cast you for Diana in the greatest thing you ever saw! It's the third from the last dance; the last will be a chorus—do you suppose I can say that? The *ensemble*, you know. So we had to put a solo or a duet dance just before that, to get more contrast, but we want the Diana thing as near the last as we can get it, because it's going to be the kind that spoils anything that comes after it. Diana

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and Her Nymphs and the Sleeping Endymion! Get the idea? Endymion's asleep on the grass; you'd guess that! And Diana comes dancing at the head of her nymphs and sees him. You know Diana, for all her independence, got a case on Endymion the moment she saw him. So that's the idea; see? Diana dances a sort of admiration dance, leading her nymphs, signifying he's the prettiest and sweetest—catch on? It'll be as graceful as any bed of white lilies in a breeze you ever dreamed of! Then Endymion awakes, sits up on his elbow, registers: 'Am I Really Me?' or words to that effect, seeing Diana. Then up he gets, and starts in dancing after the nymphs, who dance faster and faster, Diana still ahead, flitting away. You know Diana's long suit was flitting away! So on till the nymphs flit through the screening at the rear, and Diana fools 'em! She slips back, and she and Endymion do a turn by themselves, signifying 'Pleased to Meet You.' That's good history—Grecian Mythology—Diana did slip off to meet Endymion, and the moral of that is: Every dog has his day, or, There's nothing so sure as that no one's secure. Take care, Sylvia!"

"Sally Meade, you are the craziest girl! You're always that, but sometimes you're still crazier!" cried Sylvia, laughing. "I'm not sure I like your grand dance! Who's to be Endymion?"

"There you are! Put your finger right on the danger spot first pop!" cried Sally, pretending

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profound admiration of Sylvia's cleverness. "We thought either Doctor Ritchie or Lloyd, but which?"

"I imagine Lloyd would detest anything of that sort," said Sylvia. "I don't know about Mr. Ritchie—he's not a doctor yet, Sally. They both dance well; I suppose it doesn't matter. Gerald's older; boys hate to be made conspicuous."

"It doesn't matter one bit while Endymion's asleep, but when he wakes up it does matter. Which is a neat little text for your mediations, Captain Sylvia!" said Sally. "Now come on. They're all out in the billiard room, with the table gone, waiting for us. We'll put Gerald in as Endymion, then. Sylvia, Hermione Elmsley is a little genius, and she's pleased to death that we're getting this up. She says it will be a great ad. for her; people will come from far and near to see it. You know the girls' boarding school over at Baytide—Lavender Hall? The girls call it the Purple Cow, you know! Well, Hermione has strong hope that the Misses Lavender are going to engage her to teach dancing there this winter. Isn't that the best ever? Maida Clayton was simply ripping about our fête, and the way we bolstered Hermione up so she didn't need Maida's patronage, but Maida can't stand it to be out of it, so she's crawled, and we're going to let her dance Juno in one of the tableau dances. Juno's so grand and elegant that Maida can't get in any of her funny work. She manages to be in bad taste, usually, but Juno will put a lid on her!"

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"Sally, you're a villain!" cried Sylvia, laughing while she tried to look reproachful.

Sally, not in the least repentant, took Sylvia out to the billiard room and ushered her in with the announcement:

"When Greek meets Greek! Grecians, allow me to present the late Grecian nymph, Sylvia.

"We're going to make you dance Endymion, Doctor Ritchie. You've had training in Greek plays at college, and Endymion must know how to get about in a chiton more particularly than some of the other characters," said Sally, to Sylvia's relief. She was half afraid of how Sally might explain the choice of himself to Gerald. But Sally, though she was, as Sylvia had called her, "a villain," set a limit to her villainies.

"Well!" exclaimed Gerald, and said no more, but his pleasure in his promotion was unmistakable.

The rehearsal began, and a short time sufficed to show that the work of learning the dances was not going to be simple.

Hermione was a thin little electric wire conducting the mysterious spark of enthusiasm and understanding into the performers.

"She's a genius! That's the word; a genius!" cried Jack Jarvis, applauding Hermione wildly as she checked him in his pretty dance with Ruth, representing Psyche and Eros, to show him what he should do at a certain point of the dance.

"Wouldn't you like to show her to New York?"

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asked Sylvia, finding it hard not to laugh at Jack, yet liking him for the qualities which made her want to tease him.

"I sure would!" said Jack, emphatically. "I'd like an engagement for her in some bang-up show where she could use her head and her feet both, and let 'em see how they go together! They'd sit up and take notice, I'll say!"

Sylvia was delighted to find that Jack held no grudge against her, evidently had decided to accept her terms, and make it comfortable all around by being a good loser. Sylvia promptly decided that she liked him a great deal.

Sylvia's dance required rehearsing chiefly for the grouping, the pictures which were to be formed at intervals by the poses of the nymphs around their huntress leader. Sylvia herself, and Gerald, and Sylvia's solo dance which she was to give at the beginning of the fête, Hermione would teach privately, as she must all the dances of that class.

The twelve girls who were to dance as Diana's nymphs were experienced in this sort of work; seven of them Hermione had brought with her from the hotel where she was one of that summer's entertainers.

Gerald had, as he said, "a thinking part" in this rehearsal of the Diana dance, lying an interested spectator of the girls' pretty motions around him, and Diana's admiration of him as he lay, supposed to be asleep. Sylvia exaggerated her rapture over

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the discovery of this wonderful mortal, annoyed to find herself embarrassed, less by her part than by the other young people's enjoyment of it. All but Lloyd. Lloyd gloomed at the whole thing, so helplessly sulky that Sylvia was divided in mind between a desire to laugh at him and a desire to console him.

Not being able to do either, Sylvia paid no attention to poor Lloyd, but went on dancing and singing, getting to like her dance more and more as Hermione's suggestions informed it with pretty significance.

When it was going better, the Meades' maid came hurrying out to the billiard room with a frightened face.

"Miss Sally, oh, Miss Sally! The 'phone has called Mr. Gerald Ritchie. His mother's took bad!" she cried.

Gerald sprang to his feet and was off like a shot. Sylvia, knowing from her experience of the day when she had lunched with the Ritchies what he was going to, but perhaps not to so happy an outcome, cried out compassionately:

"Oh, poor, poor Gerald! Do you want me to go with you?"

Gerald turned back, but did not halt.

"Sylvia, yes! God bless you; I always want you," he said before them all, eagerly accepting her sympathy. After all, Gerald was still quite young, not far beyond boyhood, and it was hard to go home alone, perhaps to encounter death.

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Sylvia ran after him. Lloyd turned toward Ruth, looking so unhappy that his little sisterly cousin made it in her way to go over to him as soon as she could, and speak to him.

Under the cover of the music for the dance in which Maida Clayton was the principal figure, as Juno, Ruth said:

"Lloyd, dear, don't mind so much. That's Sylvia, you know. She is moved to pity and to help every bit of suffering, in man or beast, that she sees! It's not Gerald, it's unhappiness that she has gone to, on one of her lovely, quick impulses."

"You know what pity's akin to," muttered Lloyd. "What's the use, Ruth? She'll be there with Gerald if the worst happens, and—well, it's got to be borne; can't be helped."

Sylvia, bareheaded in Gerald's car, the wind of its swift motion whipping her hair around her face, sat stiff and silent as he drove to the limit of his car's speed, and far beyond the speed limit of the law, to his mother.

Gerald took Sylvia into the drawing room and left her.

"I'm grateful, Sylvia, but it's not the time to say so," he said, and was gone.

It seemed to Sylvia that it was an endless time before Gerald came down again. She looked up at him, twisting her fingers nervously, but dared not ask a question. Gerald dropped into a deep

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armchair with such a look of misery on his face, so exhausted, that Sylvia did not know how to construe it.

She waited silently, and Gerald looked at her, managing a slight smile.

"Plucky little Sylvia!" he said, and it came to Sylvia that he had said precisely that years before when he had taken her off the rocks from the incoming tide. "Scared to death, yet standing by in case you could help me! You do help, Sylvia. It's no end helpful to know you're down here when I'm fighting upstairs; this is the second time! We've won out once more, but this was by a narrower margin. She's asleep now. Sylvia, there can't be many more times."

"The one thing that would comfort me, in your place, is that it's hard for her to keep coming back to suffer over again," said Sylvia.

"Certainly. Unless one is an utter brute he has to be willing to see her free from pain. But——" Gerald stopped.

"Yes," said Sylvia, assenting to what Gerald could not trust himself to say of his love and need of his mother. "It is not yet, anyway, Gerald. And now," she added, trying to speak cheerfully, "I'm going to ask your woman in the kitchen to make you a fine cup of coffee, and then you go off to rest, while I go home."

"I'll order the coffee; we'll both have a cup, and I'll have it brought in here. Perhaps you'll play to

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me a little, and then I'll take you home in the car." Gerald was on his feet and going toward the door as he spoke.

"I'd rather, much rather walk. I'm sorry I came, if you bother over me. I thought, if you needed help, letters written, telegrams sent, anything, I'd be someone, even I haven't experience," said Sylvia, distressed that he should serve her.

"I know precisely what you thought, Captain Sylvia, *Comrade* Sylvia," said Gerald. "I might have needed you badly; I suspect I might have been badly bewildered. Stay where you are; don't you know it will be good for me to drive after this? Mother won't waken; she has to be given morphine, you know."

Gerald went to order the coffee, but was back quickly and asked Sylvia to play. "Mother can't hear," he said.

He seemed so much like a big boy that Sylvia was surprised. She had hitherto regarded Gerald as decidedly grown up; she kept toward him much of the attitude of her childhood. But now, under the reaction of a respite from his threatened sorrow, Gerald seemed a simple, quiet boy; a good boy, who was doing what he had been told to do; who might, conceivably, have just been punished and so was subdued and quiet. She did not mind him now any more than Lloyd; there was much of the same honest boyhood in him that she liked in Lloyd. Sylvia was fast concluding that boys were similar to one

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another, while there was no end to the diversity of girls.

Sylvia began to play. She had talent, and her touch upon the keys was that singing touch that fingers the keys almost as if they were harp strings, and brings out of the piano all the *legato* sweetness of which it is capable.

Sylvia had been as lazy about practice as most children are, until, in the year in which, as she said, "she met her father," by which she meant the year in which they had grown close together, she had discovered that Mr. Bell sang. After which she had set herself faithfully to practise in the hope of playing accompaniments for him and now she played beautifully. Sylvia rightly judged that Mendelssohn's sweet clarity of mood, and Beethoven's sublime courage and faith in the eternal solution of earthly problems of suffering and wrong, would help Gerald now better than anything else that she could choose.

She played movements from the Beethoven sonatas, and left them for some of Mendelssohn's loveliest Songs Without Words, till, to her delight, she saw that Gerald had fallen asleep, utterly worn out, his coffee half drunk on the table beside him, his head fallen over sideways against the rolled top of the big upholstered chair.

"Poor Gerald!" thought Sylvia. "He'll be perfectly disgusted with me and himself when he wakens, but I'm going to steal away!"

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She slipped off the piano stool and noiselessly crept over the rugs to the door. Then she went down the hall and found the maid.

"Milly, I was playing to Mr. Ritchie and he fell asleep. He is so tired! Please tell him that I slipped out and went home, and not to mind, because I truly would rather walk, and that I was delighted to know that he was resting; will you?" she said.

"Surely, Miss Bell," said Milly. "Mr. Gerald has it hard for such a young man, and this his vacation time from hard study, and loving his mother as he does. I'll tell him. I heard how lovely and quiet you were playing; I listened. He'll be ready to have me beaten for not calling him, but you are right, and good and kind to spare him."

Sylvia went homeward slowly, thinking grave thoughts, with a sense of adult responsibility upon her that was new to her.

Cassandra met her in the doorway; she had been watching for her.

"Miss Sylvia," she said, "there is trouble."

Cassie's manner, her expression, was little short of tragic.

"Oh, Cassie, what?" cried Sylvia, her strained nerves making her feel that there was little else in the world, so that, unlike herself, she was quick to take alarm.

"It is O'Malley!" said Cassandra.

Sylvia dropped down on the nearest chair.

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"Cassandra! Not, *not* O'Malley!" she gasped, a band tightening around her heart.

"O'Malley"—Cassandra repeated the word awfully—"went up into Norah's room, took Roseleen's hat. She heard, and after him. He ran to the window, high as it was——"

"Cassie!" gasped Sylvia, clenching her hands and shudderingly pressing them across her eyes.

"Yes!" said Cassie. "Dropped that hat out the window. Turned an' down over the stair's fast's he could leg it, out the door, grabbed the hat——"

"Didn't jump out the window? Isn't hurt?" fairly screamed Sylvia, leaping to her feet.

"Jump out? A dog? Now 'f 'twas a cat! Certainly he didn't jump," said Cassandra, scornfully. "'Course he isn't hurt. But Roseleen's hat is more than hurt; it's chewed to bits! An' she's crying her eyes out for it, poor little girl; clothes mean so much to her, an' Norah bought that hat in New York for her, an' it's the apple of her eye."

"Goodness! I'll buy her a whole orchard for each eye!" cried Sylvia, beaming with joy. "I'll buy her barrels of apples, or eyes, as to that! I'll get her such a hat that she'll have a medal struck for O'Malley, Distinguished Service Medal! Where is the precious old ninny?"

"Round about," said Cassandra in high disgust. "Ninny he is. If 'twas a puppy you would expect no more of him, but a dog near five years old!"

"He is only four; please, Casabianca, don't in-

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crease his age!" Sylvia remonstrated. "I went doing Grecian dances and time hung heavy on his hands—paws!—and youth leaped in his veins. Oh, there he is! Charles O'Malley, the Irish Dragoon, come here, dog of the world! Oh, if you had been killed!" Sylvia sat down on the floor to hug O'Malley, not grown up after all.

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CHAPTER XIV

"Then to Sylvia Let Us Sing"

"LABORATORY ASSISTANT, I would rather you would come to the laboratory at about noon today, not as early as usual. Would that seriously incommode you? You note that I don't mind incommoding you a little? I am afraid that is true."

Sylvia looked up quickly, thinking that she detected something out of the ordinary; she knew that it could not be many days before the test of her father's experiments to prove the theory upon which he had long been at work, would be made. She wondered whether the day, for which she was hardly less anxiously eager than he was, could have dawned, but her father smiled at her just as he always did; she could not see that he looked different, so she decided against her suspicion.

"No, Father; it won't put me out one bit, not me myself; all I intended to do this afternoon was to get at chitons for Ruth and me, under Aunt Helen's Grecian leadership—she had Greek plays and things at college, so she knows the ways of a worthy chiton. We can do that any time. I've been aching—and dreading!—to overhaul my room. I'll do that till

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twelve, then I'll call: 'Let me in! Let me in!' like the fairy-tale wolf—was it?—at the lab. door. Will that suit you, Cruel Parent, who drives away his one child?" Sylvia asked.

"Perfectly. Didn't you ever find out that cruelty is often only the reverse side of kindness? Wait and see whether or not I'm cruel!" Mr. Bell gathered up some loose memoranda sheets which lay beside his plate, and went out.

Sylvia went to the swinging door that led into the pantry between the dining room and the kitchen.

"Roseleen, I'm going up to my room to sort out ever so much to be thrown away from still more to be kept. Will you come up after an hour or more with dusters and broom, and pan and brush, and take up the bits I'm sure to scatter?" she called.

"Yes, miss, and that gladly," said Roseleen, who was eager to seize every chance for personal service to this young creature who seemed to her like an embodiment of all the loveliness that she had ever dreamed of as crowning maiden saints and fairy princesses, and, best of all, was so kind to little Roseleen.

Sylvia ran singing upstairs. The first thing that she did was to tie a white cloth over her dark hair, with a slight twist of upstanding ends which made it becoming to her sun-browned skin and oval face contours.

She looked around her, standing uncertainly in the middle of the room for a moment. Then she decided

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as it was a foregone conclusion that she would decide, to begin on her bookshelves, and dropped tailor-wise down on the floor before them.

"I suppose I ought to clear out a lot of the truck I have on top of these shelves," thought Sylvia, taking in each hand a toe of each shoe as they came out under her skirt on opposite sides from their proper right and left hand position.

She looked up along the low shelves on which was a queer mixture of china figures which she had loved and played with in her childhood; together with some pieces of rare and valuable pottery. There were several beautiful little reproductions in colours of old Italian madonnas and angels, two architectural photographs. Yet with these were three childish pictures of nursery subjects, chubby babies and highly accomplished animals, illustrating fairy tales.

Across the room were her "sporting goods," as she herself said: bat, racquet, poles, net, flanked by her "ladylike belongings"; Sylvia's dressing table and dresser were covered with the finest linen, beautifully embroidered; the tools for her toilette upon them were handsome with the plainness that only the best materials and designs attain.

"It's a nice room, in spite of itself," thought Sylvia. "I do like it, even when I get back to it from other girls' pretty rooms, but it certainly is piccalilli in design! Perhaps on my twenty-first birthday I'll put away all the kiddy things and make it consistent. There's that forlorn china cat with

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the broken ear tips. I ought to chase her off. But how I used to carry her about, and how I loved her! She was so smooth to clasp, and so kind to suck when things got too bad to be borne, and I had to be consoled! It's mean to go back on her. It's I that have changed not she! I don't care how she looks, sitting there against that heavenly blue jar! She shall sit there awhile longer, anyway. I won't say *scat* to you, so don't be troubled, Pussina, my dear!"

Sylvia fell upon her bookshelves, having renewed this decision, frequently made before, and began to take out books, assorting them as she went, into three piles: "Certainly. Uncertain. No." So she labelled the piles in her own mind, meaning books she would not give up, books that she might give up, books that she would not harbour.

"Funny the books people do buy, and strange they buy them to give someone else," thought Sylvia. "One shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth, but what can be done when the animal seems to be all mouth, and comes at you with it stretched high and wide?" Sylvia laughed a little with enjoyment of her own picture of the steed upon which she was meditating. She had grown up so separated from children of her own age by her brotherless and sisterless state, and her constant reading, that she had early formed the habit of entertaining herself in this way.

"Oh, Roseleen, I'm nowhere near ready for you," Sylvia cried as Roseleen presented herself in the doorway. "I've only begun!"

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"Yes, miss, and I didn't come," said Roseleen, her meaning clear though she surely was there in her proper person. "It's company, miss; someone askin' for you, and it's Mr. Ritchie, he told me to say, and would you forgive him comin' this early, but he—he—— 'Deed I don't know what it was at all he said he came for, but 'twas to see you, 't anyrate."

"I'll find out, Roseleen," said Sylvia, scrambling to her feet, first disentangling one of them from her skirt, which had caught it, perhaps to punish a young American for sitting like a Turk.

Sylvia ran out of the room and down the stairs before Roseleen could sufficiently recover her presence of mind to remind Sylvia of her improvised dusting cap. Consequently when Sylvia came into the room Gerald Ritchie turned to greet her, but laughed with an admiring look of amusement, and instead of "good morning" said:

"Hallo, Beatrice Cenci—or is it Madame Récamier?"

"Why either?" asked Sylvia.

"They both wore their head tied up more or less like that," explained Gerald, and, as Sylvia put up her hand and started to untie her white covering, he added: "Let it alone, Sylvia. It's quite nifty and no end becoming. Looks domestic—not lab. today?"

"Not yet. It *is* domestic, excavating my own room, and getting ready for the dust of centuries to settle on my head—it does on excavators, doesn't

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it? Did we say good morning, Gerald? And is your mother comfortable?" Sylvia asked.

"Good morning, Sylvia," Gerald said, docilely. "Mother is rather more comfortable than she often is, thanks. Please, Sylvia, let me apologize. When I found you'd gone, walked home, and that I'd actually fallen asleep with you there, *you!* What can I say?"

"My playing never had such a tribute before," said Sylvia. "I tried so hard to make you rest. I was perfectly delighted, and as proud as a peacock to find I'd made you relax, even to sleep! I liked the walk home; it's no distance! Why, you *do* mind, don't you? I thought you only felt you ought to mind, because it wasn't the correct thing for a host to do when he's entertaining a lovely girl! Oh, come, Gerald, it wasn't a lovely girl; it was only Sylvia, the youngster you've always known. Do you suppose I don't know how one drops all down in a small heap when there's been such a frightful strain, and it's over? I loved to have you go to sleep; it was nice and helpful, and I was heartsick when I thought I was no sort of good to you!"

"No good? Sylvia——" Gerald checked himself. "Will you come with me, just for a tiny spin—if you can't come for a long one—and let me do two things: First, let me pretend it was yesterday, and I was taking you home. Sort of a consolation prize, don't you see? I'm awfully upset by yesterday, and you can't make me feel it wasn't beastly rude. Anyway, I don't have you at home so often that I can afford a

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nap, waste time. Then, secondly, I want to tell you how much good you did do me, what I think of your starting right off, leaving the crowd and coming along when you knew I was in trouble, like a blessed little Sister of Charity! I can tell you better when I'm driving, and I'd like to tell you. But there's still one thing more. Mother wanted me to bring you back with me, even if you could not stay more than a few minutes. She wants to see you; there's something she wants to give you. Mother realizes, of course, that she is not sure of an hour. She is fond of you, Sylvia; there is something that she would like to say to you in case—before she—while it can be said, you know."

Sylvia's first impulse was to run back upstairs, whisk off her dust covering, whisk on her hat and a long coat over her morning gown, and go with Gerald. He looked so cast down with mortification over his nap that, though Sylvia thought it foolish, she wanted to make him feel better. But as he further unfolded the motives of his desire to get her to go out with him, Sylvia changed her mind. She did not want to be told how Gerald felt about her impulse to help him in his sorrow; she did not want to hear too much of his gratitude to her. And when he went on to say that his poor mother wanted to tell her something before she died, Sylvia recoiled. She liked Mrs. Ritchie; above all, she pitied her, but she shrank from a demand upon that pity, instinctively dreading the form that demand might take. In stories dead

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hands sometimes held tight on young lives. Sylvia's healthy youth drew back from any attempt that might be made to bind her above a grave.

"I can't go out this morning, Gerald," Sylvia said. "I must be in the laboratory before long. Anyway, please never thank me for going home with you. It was such a little thing to do. Who wouldn't stand by when trouble came? I've owed you a debt, anyway, since I was ten, for taking me off the rocks! Tell your mother I'll go to see her soon. Thank her for asking me; tell her I will go soon. Ruth and I have talked of going often. But I can't go to-day."

"There's no need of my reminding you that the days to go may be few, Sylvia," Gerald said, sadly. "I won't urge you, but Mother wants you. You've been too kind for me to be importunate."

"I wish you wouldn't act and speak as though I were coming off a mountain top, Gerald Ritchie," crid Sylvia, impatiently. "I'd like it a lot better if you'd act as if I were what I am, Clement Bell's little Sylvia, grown tall, but no more consequence than the ten-year-old snip you used to be nice to, when the other big boys couldn't see her from their immensely superior height!"

"When a child grows into a woman, a beautiful, clever, splendid girl, she is of more consequence. You're always fighting that fact, but you've got to pay for being the——"

"Give me time then," cried Sylvia, interrupting Gerald's hesitating yet emphatic praise. "Pay-

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ment isn't due yet! If I've got to be broken to harness, even silken harness, you've got to let the colt run wild, or free, for another year or so. Goodness, Gerald, I only want to be happy, can't you see that?"

"You make it clear enough," admitted Gerald. "To be happy means to you to be let alone."

"I've tried that for eighteen years; it worked well," Sylvia reminded him. "It's as if all the rest of you were taking the watch to pieces to see it run!"

"I'm afraid I'd better take myself off, Sylvia, and let you go back to your work." Gerald smiled, but not happily. "I wish you could come with me. May I come soon to take you out? And am I forgiven for my stupid rudeness?"

"You aren't forgiven for dropping off when you were completely worn out, because that was the rightest sort of right thing, but I suppose you must be forgiven for making a fuss about nothing, though that's always a little hard for me." Sylvia laughed, but she meant it. "Good-bye, nice Gerald. I do like you a lot: you know that. And give my love to your mother. I'll go to see her soon, quite soon, truly."

Gerald took the hand Sylvia held out. She gave his hand a hearty squeeze of sympathy, knowing that he was saying to himself: "It is not safe to delay coming." Poor Gerald! And about this great matter he was entirely simple, making no appeal for sympathy, no outcry over his gnawing pain.

Gerald went slowly away, got into his car, and

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drove off, without looking back to the house where, upon the piazza, Sylvia stood waiting to give him a final farewell wave.

"She likes me enough, and not too much to say so frankly. She wrings my hand like the best sort of a boy chum, standing shoulder to shoulder, and sorry if I'm hit! Comrade Sylvia she is, the best sort of a loyal, devoted comrade, but love! Sylvia Bell puts up her frank friendship as a barrier against it, and that's a barrier that can't be broken through," thought Gerald, sadly and wisely.

Sylvia, going slowly back to her room, felt a little hurt that Gerald had not given her a chance to wave to him.

"He is fine," she thought. "I never knew him till this summer, wasn't enough consequence to be known! He's the finest boy I know—well, of course Lloyd!——" Sylvia interrupted her own thoughts to say aloud to Roseleen, whom she found waiting for her: "There's no use going on this morning, Roseleen. My father wants me in less than an hour. I'll have to put off my unlucky room again. We'll bundle back these books I took out—except these which I'm going to send to the poor heathen, if there are any heathen I've a grudge against! Roseleen, callers in the morning, however nice, are hold-backs!"

"You've but to look for it, miss, when you're young an' lovely. Once you're married you'll be let do housework with no one interruptin' you," said

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young Roseleen, with the philosophy of one still fifteen and untroubled.

Sylvia set back the books which were to remain on her shelves, and threw herself across the bed, watching Roseleen dust the room, carefully taking up and setting down on the same spot exactly each of the incongruous articles which years had drifted up on Sylvia's shelves, and which sentiment had held there.

"Roseleen, I forgot to tell you that I think Mrs. Leveritt will take you on as a sort of second-second maid—say two-and-a-half maid," Sylvia said, suddenly. "She'll teach you the best ways in all the world of doing the best things in the world for you to do, and in all the world I don't know another such lovely, dear, sweet woman! I've been hoping she might take you, and I think she will. You'll be a lucky Roseleen if she will!"

"Do you go there a great deal, miss? You do, to see Miss Ruth. Then I'll be glad to go, since you can't make room for me," said Roseleen, and Sylvia felt that she had received a compliment that was worth having. As Thackeray long ago pointed out, a servant has great opportunity to know his employer, and his criticism is not based on conjecture.

"Twenty-five minutes to twelve, Roseleen! As everybody always says: Where *has* this morning gone?" sighed Sylvia, indolently pulling herself erect.

"It's gone to join the first mornin' that ever was, in the Garden of Eden, miss; that's what Sister

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Aquinas used to tell us, at home in school, did one of us ask that, an' she'd say they was all one, now, when they'd slipped past us into eternity," replied Roseleen.

"Why, Roseleen, that's a beautiful answer, and most profound!" cried Sylvia, delightedly. "Did the children take it in?"

"Oh, yes, miss, in a general way," said Roseleen, calmly. "We do be hearin' many of such answers at school. Often we'd not pay attention, but it comes to you later on; like that now."

Sylvia smiled, but she looked thoughtful as she went into her dressing room to prepare for laboratory.

"I may dress for dinner, I'm sure," she thought. "Father must be playing some sort of game with me. I'm not to work at this hour, that's sure."

So she put on a white dress, and fastened into place a narrow ribbon belt of the most delicate blue around her waist.

"My best-beloved loves blue. He told me once that my mother wore it a great deal," Sylvia said when Roseleen expressed her pleasure in the line of lovely colour falling into the snowy film of her skirt. "I like to wear blue and white for Father. All through, Roseleen? I expect your hat to-night. I ordered one from Baytide, described what I wanted on the telephone, and I'll be disappointed if it is not even nicer than the one Charles O'Malley tore to pieces. Would you expect an Irish terrier to tear up a little Irish immigrant's hat, Roseleen?"

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"It's hard tellin' what any Irish'll be at, miss," said Roseleen, to Sylvia's delight, "let alone a terrier dog."

Sylvia carried out her programme, and went to the laboratory door, where she meekly announced herself with three distinct knocks on the door.

Eben Tompkins opened it; he looked, for him, excited—Eben was a phlegmatic person. "Come in, Miss Sylvia; we was lookin' for you," he said, and Sylvia wondered, for Eben was too true a Yankee to call her Miss under ordinary conditions.

"Welcome, Assistant!" said Mr. Bell, coming forward to greet Sylvia. He took her hand as if she had been a ceremonious caller, and, holding it, brought her into the laboratory.

"Assistant, I have an announcement to make to you in which you are deeply concerned——"

"Father!" cried Sylvia, trying to clasp her hands, forgetting that her father held one of them. "It's done? It's a success?"

"It is done; it is a success!" her father echoed her. "Miss Bell, you have helped to establish a scientific fact which will be of immense service to the world."

"Did you get the last result this morning? Is it exactly as you expected? What shall you do about it?" cried Sylvia.

"I was ready to clinch it last night, but it was better to wait till this morning. It has worked out, developed precisely as I foresaw that it would. My guess has proved to have been correct. I shall

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publish the history of our process, its development, in a pamphlet that will be sent to all the scientists in the world who are interested in our line of investigation. 'Clement Bell. Laboratory Assistant Sylvia Bell.' That's the way the pamphlet will be signed! Those names will be printed clear and black, directly under the title of the discovery, on the cover page. How about it, Assistant?" cried Mr. Bell.

"Oh, Father! Heavenly!" cried Sylvia. Then she reconsidered. "No; not me, no! It's too absurd. A girl like me, who only did what you told her to, who doesn't know beans!"

"It was not beans, if you recall it; it was the lower forms of sea life with which we worked it out, my dear," said Mr. Bell, gravely. "I would not take it upon myself to pretend to the world that you knew beans, but I'm going to have my girl's name on the title page of that pamphlet announcing this discovery, if only to gratify a certain feeling I have toward her. Sylvia, dear, aren't you the innermost associate of everything that I do, in the deepest sense, but, in this special thing, have you not worked with me toward my end?"

"Yes, Father," said Sylvia, swallowing hard. "I'm—I'm pleased and happy; don't mind me."

"As though I didn't know," cried Mr. Bell. "Sylvia, we dine out to-night! Invite Ruth, Lloyd, and who else——"

"Gerald Ritchie!" cried Sylvia, promptly. "He's having such a hard time. And—oh, that's enough!"

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"And we'll celebrate our triumph at the hotel in a dinner that probably will not be so good as Cassie's, but will mark an Occasion," Mr. Bell ended his sentence.

"Father, I *am* happy!" cried Sylvia. "I don't see how I can be so happy, when there's only one of me! I feel like at least twelve people, all filled to overflowing!"

She flung herself rapturously on her father's neck, who had been wondering at the delay of this part of the reception of his news.

"You seem to be at least twelve, Daughterkins! You are a vigorous young person!" he gasped.

But it was easy to see that he did not object to the onslaught, and that to him Sylvia counted, not for twelve, but for the world.

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CHAPTER XV

"That Sylvia Is Excelling"

CASABIANCA, I feel much stranger—and more like a stranger to myself—than the little old woman did who had been to market 'her eggs for to sell' and fell asleep by the highway. She had only her skirts cut off. I've had a whole laboratory cut off. You can't imagine how strange it is not to go out there every morning to work," Sylvia said one morning three weeks after the dinner in honour of Mr. Bell's triumph.

"It must," said Cassandra. "Habits bind us, which is why we have to take care to make 'em the right kind. Ain't your father going on with those nasty things, out there?"

"Oh, he could never drop his work," cried Sylvia. "But he will not go on this summer; not this summer and perhaps not for much longer. Maybe we'll 'sail away for a year and a day to the land where the bong-tree grows'! Maybe we'll go abroad. Would that be too hard on you, Casabianca dear? You'd always stand by? Would you mind dreadfully if we went away, Father and I, and didn't stay on the burning deck with you—were gone more than a year, you real Casabianca?"

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"I do wish, Miss Sylvia, you'd drop that foolish name, which is near enough like Cassandra to be the worse for it. It was bad enough when you were younger, but now a great girl like you! How do you suppose it sounds?" Cassie cried, her long-standing grievance breaking out anew.

"Nice and silly, but no end flattering," said Sylvia, promptly. "Would you grieve for us, Casa—Cassandra?"

"Miss Sylvia, I'm a rational human being, I hope, and I couldn't expect you never to go about, but stay right here, now you've grown to be eighteen and five feet seven. I am steeled to what may arise. But your dog is not," said Cassandra.

"No," said Sylvia, sadly. "O'Malley would pine. He'd get into the papers as one of those unbearable cases of the dog dying of a broken heart, longing for his owner. I told Father I wouldn't go unless we could first be sure that O'Malley would be reasonably contented. What I want to do is to get a car, learn to drive it, take it over with us, and let O'Malley go, too. Then travel about in our own car, O'Malley on the front seat beside me, Father in the back. And who do you suppose beside him? Cassandra Billings! How's that for a programme? And Father says it's feasible!"

"Me! In Europe!' cried Cassandra, turning a dark red. "Miss Sylvia, how could I? I never approved of Europeans. Lots of 'em can't speak English. I misdoubt people of other races. I've

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"'Father, I am happy!' cried Sylvia!"

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been brought up from my birth to believe that the English tongue sort of brought a blessing to its users, so to speak, and that other countries had to get along in some sort of a makeshift way. What do you suppose they know in It'ly about the Pilgrim Fathers and how they cast off their shackles into the breaking waves, dashing high, so to speak?"

Sylvia deserved credit for the gravity with which she heard this rhetorical question.

"Sadly little, I'm afraid, Cassie, but on the other hand there are people here who haven't read Dante, and would fall down badly in an examination in—say the Ghiberti gates in the Baptistery at Florence, or what happened when Clovis became king of the Francs! We won't take Bunker Hill monument over to measure things by. Wouldn't you love to go, Cassie?" she cried.

"I missed my own bed when I went to Niagara Falls that time. Yet I might go. I'd hate to feel there wasn't any one to look after you, if you got a sore throat, or your father, either," Cassie admitted.

"Father is honoured, recognized, I mean, at last, Cassie!" Sylvia said. "He's had the nicest letters from the scientific schools. He announced the result of his work to them first, by letters. Dear me, I've no business to stand here talking to you, with all that must be done for the Greek Fête to-night!"

Sylvia fled, but as she went Cassie said, proudly, yet contemptuous of the rest of the world:

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"I never knew what your father was at till you explained it to me, Miss Sylvia, but I knew's well's I do now that he was great enough, if that's all!"

"Casabianca!" Sylvia called back. "Burning decks wouldn't budge *you!*"

It was the day of the fête, come at last. August was in its third week; the summer had flown, crowded with nothing of moment, apparently, yet crowded, so Sylvia felt, with nameless moments which were significant, combining to work changes. The island which was named "Hen and Chickens" lay off Paxton, not far from shore. It had received its name from being one central island, with several small hummucks connected with it which had once been separate small islands, but which had been revealed by the subsidence of the tide waters to be basically connected with the largest mother island. This was some four acres large, rising up from the water to a plateau top, upon which the dances were to be given.

It was an ideal place for a thing of the sort. The audience would be scattered at the "Hen's" base, filling all the "Chickens," and the dances against a summer sky on the top of the hill of the main island would be visible equally all around the tiny archipelagian group. The moonlight, supplemented by electricity, would clearly illumine the theatre, while clothing it with the mystic poetry of their rays.

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The treasurer reported a large sum of money, the proceeds of the sale of tickets. The Yacht Club had bought tickets to a man, and for all the members of their families. The yachts were turning out in great numbers, not merely Paxton's fleet, but those from the neighbouring colonies along the shore, and from Baytide, the considerable town near by.

The performers, shrouded in cloaks, gathered at the rear—if there be a rear to a round island—of the Hen, brought over in the generously offered yachts.

There were dressing rooms improvised amid the trees. The collective island was abundantly wooded up its sides and over the Chickens, which heightened the opportunity for effective pictures on the plateau top of the main island by throwing the base into heavy shadow, contrasting with the clear, brilliantly lighted space on the top.

Hermione Elmsley was in her element, yet so nervous that the girls pitied her.

"I want it to be good! Oh, I do want it to be good!" she repeated, not realizing that she spoke her wish aloud.

"If you ask me, I think most of it is punk," said Maida Clayton. "You've made a mistake, Miss Elmsley; you'll see it too late. You can't expect amateurs to put a big thing like this across. Lots of these people never learnt fancy dancing. What will you do next, especially if this is no good?"

"I shall teach in Baytide, whether it's good or

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bad," said Hermione, trying not to mind what she knew was spite.

Jack Jarvis was standing by, listening to Maida with a scowl.

"She'll come to New York, that's what she'll do!" he said. "She won't teach anywhere if I can help it! Little peach!"

"What!" cried Maida, staring in sheer amazement. "Do you mean—I see you mean—— But it was Sylvia Bell!"

"Yes, it was," Jack admitted. "Anybody that saw Miss Bell and didn't admire her—chump! But she shied off, and I hadn't got it hard enough to die. Sylvia Bell's straight; she didn't let me get hard hit. Now I'm done for! We weren't going to say a word yet, but you need to be told, Miss Clayton, that Miss Elmsley has a permanent engagement. I'm going to show her to New York, and she'll spend her time teaching me to dance her steps, to her own music. Congratulate me!"

"My gracious grandmother!" gasped Maida. "The Jarvis millions!"

"Oh, say, Miss Clayton, I hate that, don't you know! Am I such a mess that you think only of Dad's ducats?" cried honest Jack in real distress.

"You're a dandy good fellow, Jack Jarvis! Who's belittling you?" cried Gerald Ritchie, slapping Jack on the back as he came up in time to hear only what Jack said.

"Say! Go light on your taps! A chiton's miles

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thinner than a coat," remonstrated Jack. "I didn't like Miss Clayton's implying that Hermione wasn't getting much but cash, which I don't mean to allow to be all that she gets. Congratulate me, doc-elect: Hermione's going to marry me!"

"By all that's wonderful!" cried Gerald. "I certainly do congratulate you, but even if it isn't the custom, I congratulate Miss Elmsley as much. He's a pippin, Miss Elmsley, and believe me I'm already a dandy at this sort of diagnosis!"

"Oh, dear me, Jack, why did you say anything before the dances?" cried Hermione. "I didn't want any one to know yet! Besides, I wanted to tell Sylvia Bell first, myself."

"Don't mind me," laughed Gerald. "Miss Clayton and I can hold our tongues, for that matter, but let us tell! Won't we all dance gloriously in your honour, now!"

There was not time for more than a swift rush of all the girls upon Hermione, and some rapid hand-shaking with Jack on the part of the boys, before the opening tableau was staged.

It was a beautiful grouping of all the performers, and if its title: "On the Acropolis," left something to be desired in the way of Grecian architecture, at least the brow of the hill under the moonlight, with the sea glimmering around, beyond the picture, was soul-satisfying in its beauty.

The group broke up into motion, a beautiful ballet of all the dancers, like an opening chorus.

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Then followed the dances of one, two, and more performers. By the time three of these had been given there was no longer doubt as to the success of the fête.

The audience was enthusiastically encoring the numbers, repetitions were necessary; the entertainment bade fair to last beyond midnight.

Little Ruth Hapgood had a charming dance in solo, preceding her dance with Jack Jarvis, and introducing it. Ruth's solo dance was The Search of Psyche, and it merged into the dance of Eros and Psyche, with Jack.

Ruth was more like a fairy in her flowing white chiton than like a Greek.

"Isn't she a darling?" cried Sylvia, waiting with Gerald for their dance, always ready with enthusiastic admiration for Ruth. "She's so exquisite, so delicate, so like a shell cut in cameo! Could any one help loving her?"

"It wouldn't be hard to love her," Gerald said, smiling, but his eyes rested on Sylvia, not on Ruth, kindling into pleasure in her joy in Ruth.

"It's a base libel to say that girls are always jealous of one another!"

"Of course!" Sylvia scorned the accusation. "I'm jealous *for* Ruthie; never *of* her!"

"Yes, but she's not jealous of you, which is more meritorious," said Gerald.

"Fuff!" cried Sylvia. "No hinted compliment over little Ruth's pretty head! I'd be lucky to

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measure up to that small creature in one way, though I'm half a foot higher in the other sense!"

Lloyd sauntered over to them.

"Having a good time, Tink?" he asked. "You look pleased."

"I am. You?" returned Sylvia.

"Oh, yes; pretty good. It's a good show. I'll bet it's a dream seen from down there where the audience is. But they paid to see it; we didn't," said Lloyd. "Any special plan for getting home, Sylvia?"

"No. Father is here, of course, and Cassandra; Norah and Roseleen, for that matter. I'll have plenty to see me safe," said Sylvia.

"Count me in, Tink. In fact, count the others out, *and* me in! I have *Gwendolen* here, and I want to drive you back," said Lloyd.

"How did you get her over here?" asked Sylvia, with apparent innocence.

"Over at the Club House, when the yacht brings you across. Poor thing! So young, yet her mind quite gone! Thinks *Gwendolen* can be driven on the ocean! She's not a submarine, my child; she's a super-terra!" Lloyd said, severely.

"What it is to be in college and know Latin derivatives!" sighed Sylvia. "But I knew *Gwendolen* was some kind of a terror! All right, Lloyd-boy; I'll go home in *Gwendolen*, and I'm properly grateful."

"We're called, Sylvia. The Diana-Endymion & Co. dance is next," said Gerald.

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His face had clouded over. Sylvia treated Lloyd like her old-time comrade, which he was; they talked impertinent nonsense to each other, far removed from sentiment, yet Gerald felt that it stood for profound affection and trustful, mutual understanding. It seemed to push him off into the ranks of the outsiders. In vain he reminded himself that in this familiarity lay his best hope of one day winning from Sylvia the sort of love he wanted from her, that Lloyd was to her almost a brother. The fear of it lingered with him; he told himself that he "did not like it."

There was no possible way to arrange a drop curtain before this island stage, as indeed, if there had been one, it must have been hung all around the crown of the hill, the audience being placed completely around "the Hen" and on all the encircling "Chickens," the performers turning on all sides as they danced. Therefore it was necessary for the dancers to take the stage and assume their positions in the eyes of the spectators as a sort of *tableaux vivant.* Gerald, as Endymion, strolled out, wandered about a moment, then lay down and fell asleep. After the briefest space of time Diana came out, leading her nymphs, who emerged on all sides from among the trees, and began their dance.

Tall Sylvia, in her floating Grecian draperies, clasped at the shoulders by rhinestones that gleamed almost like precious gems; a luminous crescent above her dark head, carried regally on her slender neck,

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above her strong, shapely young shoulders; her bow in her hand, her quiver on her hip, was so lovely a sight that a subdued murmur rippled through the massed spectators, breaking into applause quickly subdued.

Diana's nymphs were selected with especial reference to throwing into full effect the beautiful young goddess's height. They were closely matched; all at least half a head shorter than Diana; graceful, accomplished dancers; not one incompetent, for this was one of the most charming and important of the evening's numbers. As she danced in a swift running step, with sudden significant pauses, bending low as if espying game coursing the forest, Sylvia was the embodiment of girlhood; free, innocent, and glad, and, streaming after her, came many white-robed maidens, all moving rapidly, with an indescribable effect of joy in life, and in living green things, and in stars and winds.

But suddenly Diana stopped, poised as if for flight, one foot tipped on the toes, in the pose of the Diana of the Louvre.

Then she began to move in a totally different way, in swaying waltz time, to a plaintive waltz, played delicately by one violin. She had seen Endymion! Around and around the sleeping youth Diana and her nymphs danced, admiring him, till he wakened, and, rising on his elbow, he watched the goddess and her train.

As he started up to join them, Diana and her

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nymphs fled, their flight made like the flight of doves, white draperies flowing backward, white arms curved above their heads, rhythmically running in long, gliding steps, from the mortal.

The applause that arose was interspersed with enthusiastic cries of: "Brava!" "Again!" "Encore!" "Come Back!"

Diana came dancing in alone and, prefaced by the prettiest play of unwillingness, coyness, yielded her hand to Endymion and danced with him a beautiful dance of joy expressing that, goddess and mortal, each was lovely in the eyes of the other.

Gerald danced as few young men can, or will let themselves dance, being for the most part too self-conscious for this sort of art. Gerald danced as Endymion, forgetting Gerald. Sylvia was a vision; her slender grace, her willowy height, her lovely face alight with eagerness, enjoying her own motion, made a picture that no one who saw her would ever forget.

"What a girl you have there, Clement!" said an old Paxton man to Sylvia's father. "Other girls may have something that she has, but Sylvia Bell alone excels in all ways; as a loving daughter, in beauty, cleverness, grace, and—most of all—in her happy innocence!"

"Yes," said Mr. Bell, tremulously, for Sylvia thus set before him on the hilltop seemed to him newly revealed to him. "It's contrary to convention for me to say, but who is like her? God keep her thus!"

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Sylvia and Gerald were held before their audience to the utmost limit of possibility, but at last they were allowed to disappear.

Gerald turned to his partner with a look, half smiling, half near to tears.

"They didn't want us to stop, Diana! I wish we never might!" he said.

Lloyd, looking miserable, came up to congratulate Sylvia. Ruth, first of all the girls crowding up to celebrate her triumph, reached up and pulled down to her Diana's crescent-crowned head.

"It was so wonderful, my darling, that I adore you for it, but, oh, Sylvia, don't! Here's our blessed old Lloyd!"

There were but two other numbers to follow the Diana and Endymion dance. The final one, like the opening dance, brought together all the performers for a sort of *ballet finale*.

It was hardly over, indeed the audience was clamouring for at least a partial repetition, when Mrs. Leveritt came hurrying up the side of the hill with a distressed face.

"Gerald! Where is Gerald Ritchie—— Oh, here you are! Gerald, your mother is ill. The doctor is there. It is not her ordinary seizure. She has asked for you, and for Sylvia Bell. I am going with you. Sylvia, get your cloak; you must go as you are; no time to lose! Come, poor Gerald!" she said.

Hardly realizing what was happening, thus snat-

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ched from triumphant enjoyment, Sylvia obeyed, caught up her cloak, and, with Mrs. Leveritt, followed by Gerald, made her way down to the beach where a small sailboat was waiting to take them to the mainland.

It was only when they were part way across that Sylvia realized that Lloyd was with them.

"*Gwendolen's* a roadster, but we can all hang on somehow, and I'll run you up quicker than any one else, so I came along," he said, quietly.

There was scarcely a word spoken going across. Suddenly Sylvia asked:

"Does Father know?"

"Yes; I told him. He understands," said Mrs. Leveritt, and no one spoke again.

Mrs. Leveritt took Sylvia on her lap in Lloyd's roadster, Gerald stood on a running board, Lloyd drove. It never occurred to any one to think how the car must have looked, driven by a youth in a Greek chiton, another Grecian youth on the running board, Diana on a modern American lap within the car. Too great a matter lay before them to let them remember incongruities.

"Gerald, my son," said Mrs. Ritchie, clearly. "You are here!"

This was her welcome to Gerald in words, but she put her arms over his shoulders, as he dropped on his knees before her, and smiled feebly at Mrs. Leveritt.

"Leave us, please. Sylvia, stay," she said.

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"Doctor, this is not as usual. Is it——" Gerald began as Mrs. Leveritt left the room.

"This is the last time," his mother answered for the doctor, who confirmed her by a nod to Gerald.

"Sylvia," said Mrs. Ritchie, speaking slowly but quite clearly, "this is my ring, my betrothal ring. Promise me that, by and by, when he is graduated, you are ready, you will marry Gerald. Promise it, Sylvia Bell! I am dying. Let me die happy. Take the ring."

"I can't; oh, I can't!" cried Sylvia, shrinking.

"You love Gerald," said the mother.

"No. I don't love any one but Father. I like Gerald, like him ever so much, but I can't promise that!" Sylvia sobbed miserably.

"You are too young to know. It will be right; you will be happy. There's no one like Gerald. Promise, promise! How can you deny me this, now?" cried the dying woman, taking Sylvia's hand.

"Oh, I prom—— I can't!" cried Sylvia.

Gerald arose to his feet. He had been overwhelmed by this unexpected scene.

"Mother, you must not ask it. I did not know—— Sylvia, go, dear; go away!"

Gerald gently, firmly, pulled Sylvia up on her feet, took her by the shoulders and pushed her before him to the door. He opened it, thrust her through it, and closed it behind him.

Sylvia, bent and choking with sobs, found Mrs.

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Leveritt anxiously awaiting her; Sylvia dropped into her loving arms.

"Aunt Helen, Aunt Helen! I have refused to let a dying woman have her last drop of comfort! I wouldn't promise! And now I almost could promise for the beautiful thing Gerald has done in sending me away, sparing me; and he is there alone!" she sobbed.

"Thank Heaven, dearest! She had her heart set on this, and did not realize the wrong she tried to do! Thank Heaven, you have not promised! It would have been wrong, horribly wrong! Such a promise must not be given out of pity to the dying but out of love for the living. If, later, you give Gerald that promise for his own sake—— Never mind, Sylvia, dearest child! It is cruelly hard, but entirely right!" Mrs. Leveritt comforted her.

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CHAPTER XVI

"She Excels Each Mortal Thing"

IN A white skirt and middy blouse, with her newly washed hair tied at her neck with a blue ribbon, Sylvia, sitting on the upper step, curled up with one foot under her so that her height was not perceptible, looked minus three of her eighteen years. In fact, she felt eighteen plus three years, for sitting there, little-girl fashion, she had been thinking long and serious thoughts.

Her reason for this place and position was that O'Malley had been stoned into the yard by a passing boy, merely because there were stones at hand and a dog to throw them at, and not from personal animosity against O'Malley.

O'Malley's psychology did not make this clear to him; his feelings were deeply hurt, and his mistress had dropped down thus near to his level in order to take his head in her lap, and with a palm on either side of it, rub out from his brain his sense of injury.

"Yet you do know, Charles O'Malley, that it is not your way to be meek under wrongs. You are by nature a scrapper, my terrier. Own up. You don't know that boy, and you don't really

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care much what he does, but you grieve over not getting a chance to bite his legs! I'm sorry about that myself; he'd no reason to attack you. But you might have been shot as a dangerous character, if you had done it, so it's better as it is. It's an unjust world, Dragoon-of-my-Heart, in which punishment does not always fall on the guilty."

O'Malley took a closer hitch to Sylvia as she talked to him, bringing not only his head but his shoulders into her lap, heaving a great sigh as a bid for further sympathy, which more than compensated the poseur for his lost peace of mind—and not a stone had struck him.

But that little piece of acting was wasted by O'Malley. Cassandra came out and said:

"Miss Sylvia, Ruth Hapgood called. I couldn't get all she said because that Mrs. Henderson—and Hinderson's what I call her and it suits her better!—had her receiver down, listening in, as usual! But whatever I lost don't matter much, for Ruth said she was coming over."

"That's good, Cassie. I'd like to see her," said Sylvia. "It's rather empty when Father's away. It doesn't seem as though he would be back to-morrow. But he's having a beautiful time seeing his scientific brethren! It would be fun to get Father to have this telephone line taken out and put in a private wire! Mrs. Henderson would lose us as source of information! I'm told she's particularly curious here, too! Yet it would

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be a shame; people who listen to other people's telephone messages must be sadly in need of entertainment! I was thinking, Cassie, if I feel lost and lonely when Father's gone less than a week, how must Gerald Ritchie feel, knowing his mother cannot come back? And he has no one that really belongs to him; and a young man left alone is so much more helpless than a girl. A girl would have the care of her house. Don't you think lonely women often make a house stand for family?"

"I know it, but I don't see how you do," said Cassandra. "On the other hand, he'll go back to college and get taken up studying, and derive comfort from cutting up folks."

"Oh, Cassandra!" Sylvia was honestly shocked. "I don't think you altogether like Gerald."

"Do, too!" declared Cassandra, with an obstinate look. "Or I would 'f I didn't like Lloyd Hapgood so well. You're sort of taken up with Gerald Ritchie, and he's a fine boy. I'm willing to admit that, older and all, he sort of outshines Lloyd. But Lloyd's young, and he hasn't an ounce of conceit to help him show off, though to my way of looking at it, there's just about ten times as much to be seen where 'tain't shown than where 'tis. Lloyd's what I call real estate; solid investment, won't run off, nor fail you."

"Yet real estate can depreciate in value. It depends so much on what happens in the neighbourhood," said Sylvia, with a desire to tease Cassie.

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"However, Cassie, no one need defend Lloyd to me. I always say that he is just Lloyd, and that covers it. I'm as fond of him as I could be if his last name was 'Bell'."

"Not the other way about?" Cassandra suggested.

Sylvia chose to ignore the suggestion. Instead of answering it, she said:

"You always see straight, and you brought me up and know me better than any one else does, Cassie. Do you think I am cruel not to have given that promise to poor, dying Mrs. Ritchie? I keep thinking and thinking about it, and I do feel dreadfully. You see, I needn't have kept it for a long time. Gerald has two years more in medical college, then hospital time to put in, so perhaps, before I had to face the consequences he'd have seen someone he liked better, and no harm would be done." Cassandra gave a short laugh.

"Sylvia," she said—and that showed that she was profoundly interested, for she would never accept her privilege of calling her charge by her first name without its prefix—"Sylvia, you do seem like a little girl, seen in one of those glasses that pull a body out long and out of proportion! But you're not such a silly as to ask seriously if you ought to give such a promise as to marry any one, trusting to luck to get out of keeping your word! And whole volumes and 'tombs' as I've heard 'em called, though why books should be called 'tombs' I don't see, however solemn the subjects, couldn't

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tell you any plainer whether 'twould be right for you to say you'd some day marry Gerald Ritchie than you tell yourself when you hope, maybe, he'd like someone else better! Girl alive, that's the last thing in the list you could hope if you was anywhere near to liking him enough!"

"That's true, Cassie! That is true!" cried Sylvia, evidently relieved by the light thus shed upon her darkness. "I've read such numbers of stories, too. I ought to know how the heroine walks the floor nights if the hero sees another girl ever so far off! I'd be delighted if Gerald would fall in love with Ruth! And there's no way I could praise him higher. I really didn't quite want Jack Jarvis for her, though he is nice. I didn't want her slighted for me, that was all. But Gerald is good enough for any one, even for blessed little Ruthikins."

"Suppose Lloyd liked Sally Meade, or someone, best?" said Cassandra.

"That's different," said honest Sylvia after a slight pause. "He couldn't, because he is Lloyd. Being Lloyd means never changing, and Lloyd and I were chums from the start."

"Chums! H'm! Here's Ruth," said Cassandra, turning away.

"Sylvia, going out sailing?" asked Ruth, coming up the steps. "Why are you sitting here?"

"I was going sailing; I dressed for it. O'Malley has been asking me if I weren't going, but I had to

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disappoint him," said Sylvia. "I sat on the steps to cuddle him after a bad boy stoned him, and I was too lazy to get up. Cassie came out and talked to me, so I just continued to sit. She told me you called up to say you were coming over. Anything on? Mercy, lend me your hand and pull, Ruth! My foot is *dead;* I've been sitting on it so long!"

"The triumph of mind over matter!" observed little Ruth as she pulled Sylvia to her feet by the hands which she held up to her. Then, as Sylvia clasped a piazza post and swayed around it, holding up her numb foot from contact with the floor, Ruth said:

"I want to talk to you about the proceeds of the fête. We're rather uncertain. You see we cleared more than we expected to make. Sally arranged with Hermione, and we were to pay her three hundred for training us. We have a little over five hundred clear. What shall we do with it?"

"Don't bother about it; give it to Hermione, she won't mind! Ruth, I'm crippled for life!" cried Sylvia.

"Yes, but Hermione is going to marry Jack Jarvis," Ruth reminded her. "It doesn't seem sensible to hand over to her two thirds as much again as she was to get, if she's to have the Jarvis fortune."

"Pay her three hundred, and buy her a wedding present with the other two. Or a wedding present for Enos Coffin and his Allimetta. Send it to a

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home for cripples—that appeals to me now!" Sylvia hopped about on one foot, gingerly trying the returning circulation of the afflicted one by putting it down and instantly drawing it up again.

"If the committee would agree I'll tell you seriously what I'd like to see it used for," Sylvia cried. "I'd like to see it spent for something nice for Gabriel Gaby."

"Sylvia, he wouldn't take it," cried Ruth. "I'd like that, too, if he would."

"Of course he wouldn't take it as a cash present, but he would take a gift, bought and sent to him, wrapped up in pretty words, telling him how everybody respected and loved him. Gabriel has a soft heart, susceptible to affection. See if the rest would think well of that," cried Sylvia, carried away with the idea and the picture it painted before her of the old man, whom she truly loved, beaming with delight over his tribute.

"They won't mind; the rest, I mean. They don't care who has the money as long as they had the fun," said Ruth. "I love the idea! But, Sylvia, what would you get him?"

"Nothing that he really needs," said Sylvia promptly. "He has enough to live on in his own funny little, clam-like way, and he gets most of his wood on the beach, when the autumn winds and tides blow in the drift. We—— Father sends him things to eat; Cassie, or someone in our house, cooks and takes him savoury little messes often.

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Gabriel is stark mad about music. You know how he makes his harmonica do unheard-of feats. I say send him a small organ; six octaves would be more than he'd ever need, and his shack is tiny. But send him an organ! He would be the happiest man on the coast, and on the opposite coast of Great Britain! He'd play and sing when the storms blew around him, and, when one of us dropped in on him, we'd play to him. Oh, truly, Ruth, that would be a great thing to do! He wants a clock badly, too. If we can manage it, let's get a little parlour organ and a clock for dear old Gaby!"

"Sylvia, what is the reason you beat us as you do?" Ruth beamed on the girl for whom she felt a sort of adoration. "We were racking our brains, and we couldn't hit on an idea that any one really liked, not even the person suggesting it! So Sally Meade said: 'Go ask Sylvia what she thinks; she'll hit on some peachy thing that no one else would ever see'. You seem to *feel* what will set people up rather than to think of it! I wonder why?"

"Oh, Ruth, for goodness' sake! I don't know! How can I know when it isn't so? And besides, if it were, who knows Gabriel Gaby as I do, of you all? Wasn't he my sailing teacher, my harmonica music-master, and my philosopher and friend? 'Course I'd think of him! We're intimate friends," cried Sylvia, impatiently. "You'd ruin me if I didn't have a wee bit of sense! I'd be like that woman George Ade wrote of, whose shirtwaist

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was all over pinholes from the medals that had been pinned on it—only she pinned on her own medals! Two hundred is not much for an organ, but a little one—and not too magnificent? Perhaps we can! I wonder if Baytide might have one second-hand? The sort of parlour organ I mean, worked by pedals, would be likely to be sold second-hand, I'd think! Only people like Gabriel would want one; he'd love it madly!"

"We'll get Lloyd to drive us over," declared Ruth. "Or—or—Gerald, Sylvia?"

"His car is a touring car; Lloyd's a roadster. Sally ought to go." Sylvia refused to hear Ruth's implication. "What does Hermione say? About everything, you know? It *is* a surprise! You don't mind the Jarvis millions? It *is* hard on nice old Jack to speak only of his money; he was right!"

"I mind! They never came anywhere near me!" cried Ruth. "Do *you* mind?"

"*I* mind? I never once thought of it in that way!" cried Sylvia, and they both laughed.

"Hermione doesn't say much. She looks perfectly happy. I'm sure she doesn't think first of the millions," Ruth then answered. "Jack is perfectly happy, too. We'll have a magnificent wedding in Paxton, because here's where it happened; such a wedding as this town never saw, at Christmas. I shall come back for it. The New York part of the affair will be here, of course. You'll see Jack's sister Peggy, Sylvia, but it will be too late! I

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know you're to be asked to be maid of honour, and I'll be a bridesmaid, with half a dozen more—dear me! Talk about glory and fun! Oh, me!"

"Luscious!" cried Sylvia, gleefully, too thoroughly a girl not to smack her lips over this coming feast. "It may not be so bad to be grown up, after all, in winter! In summer that sort of good time wouldn't be so good, but in winter, when *The Walloping Window Blind* is pulled up and covered, and all the rest of the boats, too, then a grand wedding will come in fine. Ruth, I never saw one! You may have, at your home, but I never did!"

"I never did, either, except pretty weddings; nothing magnificent. And I never took part in one, never!" declared Ruth.

"Then it isn't true that you are a widow?" cried Sylvia, with amazement considerably exaggerated.

She caught little Ruth's hand, tucked it through her arm, and began to parade the piazza, bending down toward Ruth with an air of complete devotion, and both girls sang the "Bridal March" from Lohengrin through closed teeth, fondly believing it sounded a little like a pipe organ.

"Sylvia, we are losing our minds!" declared Ruth, stopping their nonsensical march.

"Ruthie, we had none to lose!" retorted Sylvia.

"Come upstairs and make yourself pretty, and let us lay our plan before the committee, and then get one of the boys to drive us over to Baytide

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to stalk an organ and a clock! That is, if they approve, but I know they will. If the organ costs two hundred, we'll all chip in to buy the clock, anyway. Your father is away; come and lunch with us. Aunt Helen grumbles all the time that we can hardly catch a glimpse of you nowadays." Ruth turned toward the house as she spoke, and Sylvia docilely followed her, O'Malley bringing up the rear with a downcast air, knowing that his hope of a sail, called into being by Sylvia's middy blouse and duck skirt, was dashed for the morning.

"It's a grand and glorious plan, Captain Sylvia!" declared Sally Meade when she had heard the suggestion for the use of the unexpected funds.

"Take me to Baytide with you! We want to get our three hundred for Hermione in gold. And we want to have a jollification to present it to her, and celebrate her engagement. Say, wasn't that a surprise, though! Here were we plotting to help Hermione stand for her principles and perceptions, against Maida's lack of these valuable possessions, and by and by we shall all contrive to speak carelessly of knowing well Mrs. Jack—John Jarvis, and be hoping she'll invite us to her box at the opera! Virtue wasn't its own reward this time; there's a lot more to it, but it's come out on top, that's sure!"

"It's a nice fairy-tale ending," said Sylvia.

"Not a grim tale?" hinted Sally, but Sylvia and Ruth practised upon her their method of pun-

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ishment which they called "ignoring." It consisted of a haughty turning away of the up-tilted head, and a baleful stare of contempt straight into the punster's eyes. It was anything but ignoring; it clearly conveyed the enormity of a pun.

Sylvia and Ruth went to Mrs. Leveritt's, leaving Sally with the understanding that they were to pick her up to drive to Baytide at half-past two. In the meantime, Sally was to see the other four girls of their committee, and if there were any objection to the plan of a gift for Gabriel Gaby she was to telephone to Mrs. Leveritt's to say so.

"I can't take you all," said Lloyd, mournfully. "Why did I choose a roadster? I had my choice; Father told me to take whatever I wanted in that line. What a chump I was! Yet it has advantages at times! I'll hire a car, a touring, same make, and then you can all go. Aunt Helen, too."

"We want to ask Gerald Ritchie to drive us, Lloyd," said Sylvia, somehow feeling the explanation incumbent upon her. "He needs to get out. He might not go for pleasure, but he will go to take us."

"If you want him, of course, Sylvia," said Lloyd, stiffly. Then his natural kindness asserted itself; he was ashamed of being churlish.

"Right you are, as usual, Captain Sylvia!" he said, heartily. "Poor old doc is having a hard time. He looks finished. There's no one there with him but the two servants. It seems he hasn't

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so much as an aunt, and though we know what aunts are, don't we, Sylvia?"—Lloyd frowningly shook his head toward his beloved Aunt Helen to signify what a trial an aunt might be—"though we know aunts are hard to endure, still it would be something to have one, when you're left like Gerald. He's arranging to close the house when he goes to college, and that makes it worse. A shut-up house is the gloomiest thing this side of the Styx. Call up Gerald, and put it to him strong that we need him to help us out."

"You, Ruth!" said Sylvia, with a smile for Lloyd that was sufficient reward. Ruth called up Gerald, and got so speedy an answer that it showed him at hand when the bell rang, and she said:

"Gerald, are you too busy to be charitable this afternoon? We want to go to Baytide, Sylvia, Sally, Lloyd, and I, to invest the proceeds of the fête. We have no car: would you take us? Bless you! I knew you would and——— Hold the wire, Gerald! Aunty, shall I get him here to lunch with us, poor boy?" asked Ruth, turning back to the room, her hand over the mouth of the instrument.

"Gerald," Ruth resumed when Mrs. Leveritt had said a hearty *Yes*, "are you there? We are going to take lunch here, at Aunt Helen's. Please bring the car around and lunch with us, then we can start right away afterward. . . . Nonsense! Just

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ourselves and Sylvia! . . . That's right, Gerald! Surely we want you! . . . Indeed you're not a killjoy, ever! Besides, we are only going to eat informally, just as always at home, and then go on a charitable errand! There's no question of a frolic. Good-bye! Thanks, Gerald!"

Gerald came. He was thinner, pale, his eyes cloudy, Sylvia thought. She had not seen him, except at the funeral, since the night his mother had died, the night when, but a short time before her death, Gerald had danced the Endymion rôle to her Diana.

The effort that everyone made at first to be natural made the three young people constrained and unnatural. Mrs. Leveritt, only, could be her natural sweet self, for she was old enough to be Gerald's mother, and there was nothing to restrain her impulse to treat him with the affectionate pity that she felt for him in the loss of his mother. Sylvia could not forget that she had refused Gerald's dying mother her heart's desire, nor that this must be equally Gerald's heart's desire.

Ruth and Lloyd were embarrassed by the complication of many emotions connected with Gerald, and also by their inexperience in dealing with grief. There is a great disadvantage in feeling a strong sympathy when one is too young to know what to do with it.

Gerald, however, did not allow himself long to be a burden upon his friends. He threw aside his

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sorrow and made his entertainment easy for Ruth and Lloyd, even, which was harder, for Sylvia.

Mrs. Leveritt, watching him, felt herself go out to Gerald with great liking for his unselfishness.

The party for Baytide got off in good time, stopped for Sally Meade, and were off, spinning down the perfect level road at a speed just enough beyond the limit to add interest to the progress.

They found in Baytide a small organ for which the music dealer, who had taken it in part payment for a piano, acted apologetic when he said that he "must ask them eighty-five dollars, times bein' what they were." It was a pleasant-toned little instrument, better than the average, and the red felt background for its machine-turned ornamentations was unfaded. They also found a clock that Sylvia recognized the moment that she set her eyes upon it as the clock-affinity of Gabriel Gaby's soul. It was a clock that hung on the wall; that struck the half hours, and chimed the hours on four bells; which had a clear face, with unmistakable Roman numbers, and an expression that was a guarantee of character. For this clock the dealer asked thirty-five dollars, which the committee willingly paid, and with no slight satisfaction put the clock in its box in the car.

"We have eighty dollars left!" cried Sally Meade. "Let's get a rug for Gabriel, as bright coloured and as large as our money affords."

This they found to be an Axminster, eight by eight feet square, which in Gabriel's room would

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cover all the floor that was visible beyond his furniture. With five dollars, still unused, they bought a coloured print of a ship magnificently surmounting waves of the highest sort.

"I think dear old Gabriel will almost die of joy!" cried Sylvia, delighted with this last purchase, her own suggestion.

A truck was to bring the organ and the rug over to Paxton the next day, and the five young people, refreshed with Baytide's special brand of sundaes, started back to where they had left Gerald's car.

It all happened in an instant. Sylvia started to cross the street ahead of the rest. She slipped on a spot on the asphalt pavement wet with oil, and went down as a motor truck passed over her.

"Sylvia!"

It was Sally Meade, only, who could speak. Ruth crumpled up on the sidewalk without a sound.

Gerald and Lloyd threw up their hands, and Gerald darted forward. Lloyd, his hands covering his eyes, groped his way after him.

There was the instantaneous crowd around Sylvia that an accident seems to evoke, but it let the boys through, recognizing by their anguish that Sylvia was, in some way, theirs.

Together they dropped on their knees beside her, and Gerald lifted her slightly. "Sylvia!" Lloyd spoke her name.

Sylvia opened her eyes and smiled at him, then at Gerald.

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"I thought I was dead. I do not believe I am hurt," she said.

It was true. By almost a miracle the great truck, which would have crushed her, had spanned Sylvia's body as she fell, and there was not a mark upon her delicate skin to show that she had escaped a horrible death by a margin so slender that it could not be expressed.

The two boys helped her to her feet; her masses of dark hair fell around her, jarred down in her fall. She was white to her lips, but she laughed bravely, if tremulously, and waved her hand to Sally.

"What a girl!" "Suppose she'd have been killed!" "Isn't she beautiful?" murmured the crowd, falling back with joy on every face.

"It's Sylvia Bell of Paxton, the one they call Captain Sylvia! There's not her equal anywhere," said someone as Sylvia gained the sidewalk.

Ruth was in worse state than Sylvia. Gerald went after the car and took the girls in from where they were. They drove home in silence. What could be said?

But as they stopped at the Bell house, and Ruth, who was to stay with her, got out with Sylvia, Gerald said: "At least it has shown me that I had not fully learned to be unhappy."

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CHAPTER XVII

"Upon This Dull Earth Dwelling"

MR. BELL returned unexpectedly the same day upon which the purchasing committee had driven to Baytide.

Sylvia was alone on the piazza with O'Malley when he came. The realization of her danger that afternoon, and how, in a brief moment, she would have been hurled from her joyous, vivid youth into a horrible death, had been increasing with the passing hours. Most of all, she thought of how her father would have been summoned by telegram and would have come home to find only the crushed, broken body that had been his girl. The imagination of his anguish in that desolation gripped her so strongly that she hardly remembered the personal effect of the tragedy, had it befallen, upon herself.

"I should not have been here. I should be dead! Sylvia Bell dead! Why, how strange! But, oh, Father, Father! How could he have come into this empty house!" she thought. Then looking up she saw her father, coming unexpectedly in at the gate; he had arrived on the last train from Boston.

She leaped to meet him with a cry that startled him, and clung to him, laughing and crying.

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"Father, Father, my dearest! Oh, I'm so glad, *glad* to see you! So glad you're seeing me!" she cried.

"Sylvia, what has happened?" asked Mr. Bell, setting down his bag and taking the largest piazza chair.

Sylvia dropped down upon its arm and laid her cheek on her father's head, his arm encircling her.

"You might not have found me here. I came near, nearer than near, to fail of waiting for you!" she said. Then she told him what had happened that afternoon. Mr. Bell did not speak. He turned and gathered Sylvia into his arms, drawing her tight to his breast as if she had been a child, and like a little child she clung to him speechlessly, like a child that has been taken up out of a nightmare in the dark and carried into light, into the safety of loving arms.

"There's no word but: Thank God!" Mr. Bell broke a long silence by saying. "We'll have to be good, my Sylvia, after this!"

"That's what I've been thinking, Father," Sylvia laughed tremulously. "I've been thinking you and I must give up all our bad habits, by way of thanksgiving. Only I wasn't sure—— My strongest habits are you, O'Malley, and the catboat. I don't believe I must give up these? And your strongest bad habits are me and the laboratory! Father, we seem to be quite nice, already, when we take an inventory, don't we?"

"One of us does," said Mr. Bell, tightening his hold

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on his treasure. "Don't give up me and O'Malley; we'd both suffer! And don't give up *The Walloping Window Blind*, because you'd suffer! I think the best thing is to keep straight on in your old way. After all, it is a way sufficiently approved to have made you preserved to me!"

"With a sharp look out to improve upon it," Sylvia amended the arrangement. "Father, since I am here, alive, I'd better see that you don't starve to death! What about a nice, cozy little supper? We didn't expect you; we'd planned to have several truly luscious things for you to-morrow night, but I know there are two pleasant, cold, soft-shell crabs, which will be agreeable, though cold, and new bread, and a two-story cake, and some peaches, and I'll make coffee in a jiffy. Cassie is out, so is Norah. Roseleen went to Aunt Helen this afternoon, to live there."

"I have had supper, Lady Bountiful," said Mr. Bell. "Yours sounds as though having had another was a misfortune. You've made me hungry all over again!" he added, seeing Sylvia's look of disappointment, knowing how dearly she loved to prepare him food. "Suppose I forget the other! I'd be made happy with all those delectable viands, if you have nothing better to do than to get supper for me."

"There's nothing in the world better to do!" cried Sylvia, jumping up with a quick little kiss that was aimed at her father's cheek, but lighted on his ear. "I'm perfectly happy when I'm seeing you eat any-

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thing I get ready, dearest poky Scientist! You must tell me all about the other poky scientists, and what they said to you, and what you answered back —all saucy-like! And what you're going to do next, and whether you saw a nicer, taller, better-looking girl, whom you liked better than your foolish Sylvia, and—and—everything! That will be after the crabs, and while you sip the coffee! I've nothing to do to-night; I forgot to say. I thought they'd be here asking if I was still up and doing, but they're not—thank goodness!"

"They?" inquired Mr. Bell.

"Ruth and Sally, Gerald and Lloyd, who were with me," explained Sylvia. "Fatherums, you don't know how I like to be at home like this, nobody coming; just ourselves, and I getting your supper!"

"I see that is true," said Mr. Bell. "That's another thing for which to be grateful to the extent of feeling obliged to be good. There's time enough for anything more to intrude. I don't believe I'm criminally selfish."

"There isn't anything more. How can one be more than perfectly, blissfully happy? I'd like to keep right on as I am for another eighteen years!" cried Sylvia, darting through the pantry door into the kitchen, snatching down an enveloping bungalow apron as she ran and throwing it over her head; it was indeed a happy face that emerged through it and turned upon Mr. Bell.

But Mr. Bell shook his head dubiously.

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"Thirty-six! Oh, I'm not so sure of that! You'd be twice eighteen then, Sylvia, and that's the sere and yellow leaf," he said.

"Fuff!" cried Sylvia. "Gabriel Gaby's sixty-six and he's not in the sere, nor yellow; he's in the green leaf! He's younger than any one. I'm sure somebody tacked the wrong initial on him; that he's Gabriel Baby, not Gaby! He's a sort of strayed, salt-water cherub, little round Gabriel! Father, we've bought him an organ, a clock, a rug, *and* a picture, high colours, ship in full sail. I'm sure he'll weep for joy and dry his eyes on Mate. She won't mind! She's used to salty dampness, that cat!"

Sylvia bustled about, humming as she worked, turned on the flame of the gas stove for the coffee, got butter, the cold crabs, and fruit from the refrigerator; spread the end of the dining table with sundry doilies; got out the necessary plates, a cup and saucer, the silver, singing and chattering to her father as she hurried his supper, choosing to rush it, under the pleasing fiction that he was suffering pangs of hunger while he watched her.

Truth to tell, Mr. Bell did discover an appetite as he watched Sylvia fly about and caught whiffs of the peaches she was cutting up, the bubbling coffee which she prided herself upon making, "as well as a French woman," she told him.

"How she loves the homely, intimate things, this beautiful young Diana!" thought her father. "How little spoiled she is by praise and admiration! I

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doubt she fully realizes that her crystal purity, her fine scorn of all that is not fine, even this womanly, domestic side of her, are the influence they are upon her comrades. What have I done to deserve this girl of mine? At home in the clouds, and at home on the dull brown earth; that's Sylvia."

But instead of voicing his thoughts, he said:

"If you don't hurry, Sylvia, I'll forget everything that happened to me on my trip, and you'll never know what the scientists said to me, nor what I answered back!"

"You ungrateful Clement Bell! Am I not getting supper so fast that I expected you to think I was Titania, with Puck helping her, instead of Sylvia? Come, then, starving father, and see that you don't leave so much as one grain of sugar."

Sylvia took her own place at the head of the table to gloat over her father eating. Since she was not eating, she permitted herself to rest her elbows on the table, framing her flushed face in the support of both her palms. She looked warm, but entirely happy, her eyes shining with the unspeakable delight of a true woman who is supplying the need of food to the Dearest Man.

Mr. Bell looked across at her, and the sudden realization of how that lovely young face might have looked at that moment if the heavy truck had not missed her between its wheels sent the blood back against his heart, which stopped for a few beats, making him dizzy. But he drove away the horror of

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that thought, turning with all his force to enjoyment of his great happiness, so nearly turned into incurable grief.

With Sylvia listening, eyes and ears and pride in him all active, Mr. Bell told her where he had been, whom he had seen, what had been said to him of the probable result of his contribution to scientific knowledge.

"I have the first proofs of the pamphlet in my bag, Assistant. We'll go over them together. And I'm going to take a vacation from further laboratory work for a while, perhaps a good while. I shall accomplish more for letting myself unconsciously mature in my mind another idea that is half formed. What would you say to going abroad this autumn? Say in October?" Mr. Bell ended.

"Oh, of course I want to go! Yes, I more than want to go!" said Sylvia, slowly. "But—it is dear at home! And I could learn more about cathedrals and galleries; I'm not so particularly up on them! Wouldn't you like better to get a car, let me learn to drive it, take Ruth and Cassie and drive to Colorado, or California? Or both to California and Colorado? Then we could take O'Malley easily; he'd die if we went abroad and left him!"

"I truly believe that is the real ground of your preference!" cried Mr. Bell.

"He would, literally, die!" persisted Sylvia. "Not the least doubt of that. And it does seem a shame to let a perfectly good, devoted Irish Dragoon,

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like O'Malley, pine to death. I couldn't enjoy anything that cost such a friend as O'Malley! And, truly, I'd be perfectly wild with joy driving across the continent! I can't sail in winter, you see, Father, and that would be nearly as much fun. And we'd take Ruth, wouldn't we?"

"'See America first', the slogan?" suggested Mr. Bell. "Also O'Malley go bragh? I must say, I couldn't sentence that dog to heartbreak! All right, Sylvia. I am entirely ready to agree to your substitution. There is plenty of time for Europe—I only fear there may not be plenty of Europe for the time; things are not encouraging over there. Of course we'd take Ruth!"

"Wasn't that easy to settle?" cried Sylvia, surprised. "I think we ought to put that through. I'm afraid I'll want to settle down at home when the time comes, be content to drive no farther than Boston. I'm quite a settling-down person, Mr. Bell —for a person that's never still. I'm afraid I ought to be ashamed!"

"Not of contentment, and love of home, Lady of the House!" said Mr. Bell, positively. "Now, I've done almost what you told me to, and I'd not have left the grains of sugar, if I didn't drink my coffee black. Do you clear away, or leave it for Norah?"

"I'll set the butter back into the refrigerator, and I'll pile the plates in the pantry sink. I wouldn't like to come in at bedtime to find a cluttered table, if I were Norah, and it's fair to put yourself in her

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place, isn't it? Besides, Cassie has a little tiger cat out here who came to us, and who doesn't mind O'Malley; I suspect because she needs a home too badly not to risk a terrier. I'm going to put these crab remains out for her," said Sylvia, carrying out much of her design as she talked.

"Consideration for your maid and the little beasties. That's right, Sylvia. The merciful obtain mercy. Perhaps the kindnesses you're fond of doing, dear, stood between you and the wheels of the truck to-day," said her father.

"I'm not especially kind, Father. I like everything and everybody to be safe and happy, though," Sylvia said, putting her hand into her father's arm to return to the piazza.

In the afternoon of the next day the Grecian Committee, as it amused them to call themselves, was to assemble on the beach and go in a body to Gabriel Gaby's shack, escorting the Baytide truck when it came over with his gifts.

It required patient management to combine the committee with the truck, and, waiting for the truck to appear, the committee grew nervously afraid that Gabriel would slip through their fingers.

"He doesn't go out often these days, I know," said Sally Meade, "but it would be just the luck if he chose to-day to sail to the Isle of Shoals. Or he might go out to the lobster catch. Sylvia, you go ahead and hold him in your charm till we get there.

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Don't you give him a hint, but if he tries to go out give him a blow; lay him out senseless and then drag him into the shack and shut the door! Whatever you have to do to him to keep him in, short of murder, do it! Trot along, dear Captain Sylvia; you're Gaby's prime favourite, anyway, so go down and secure him for the presentation."

"All right; I'll go, but I haven't found Gabriel out this summer!" Sylvia said, starting off.

"Be sure he doesn't find you out! About the coming event!" warned Sally.

"Do I let secrets slip?" demanded Sylvia, and was gone.

She found Gabriel Gaby and Mate, just as she expected to find them, sunning themselves; the smaller of the pair frankly dozing, the larger one pretending to be awake whittling, but actually nodding considerably, with frequent lapses into a doze.

"Ah, there, Sylvie!" cried Gabriel, arousing and making a deep gouge in his piece of pine wood as he jerked himself upright. "I declare, I was that int'rested in my work you made me jump, an' I cut her too deep!"

"Gabriel Gaby, truth is mighty and it prevails! You know you were napping, like Mate, but she doesn't mind owning up!" Sylvia reproached him. "What are you making?"

"A submarine for a little chap down to the hotel. 'Cutest little chap you'd ask to see! Hair's bright's the newest twenty-dollar gold piece, an' full's nice a

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colour; curls all over his head, 'specially when he's been in the water. Asked me 'f I couldn't carve him a submarine. Says I: 'Surest thing you know, only 'twon't be anything but a United States Navy boat'. Says he: 'What'd you think I am; a traitor?' Traitor, mind you! Must be six, I guess. So he's goin' to git his submarine, solely for his country's service! I'm goin' to cut it's good's I can."

Gabriel Gaby fell to work in earnest after this explanation, fully awake.

"I wish you'd put that up for a while, and play to me on your harmonica," said Sylvia. "I have a desire for it that can't wait. The little chap's so much younger than I am that he can better afford to wait for his submarine than I can for my music!"

"Land sakes, Sylvie, 'tain't so! You're less'n six! You're the same little kid you was at four when I used to play for you. Such nonsense! You'n' my harmonicum!" Gabriel Gaby grumbled, but he laid aside his whittling and produced his harmonica from his pocket, shaking the loose tobacco out of it, as Sylvia remembered that he always did, and looking highly flattered by her request.

Gabriel Gaby played his unpromising instrument skilfully; Sylvia sincerely enjoyed it, not precisely on her musical side, perhaps, but with her sense of time, and by no means without her sense of humour.

Gabriel was ecstatically performing, his eyes shut, his head back, one foot flapping to mark the time, tipped upright, its heel dug into the sand,

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when, just as he had reached the chorus of "Nancy Lee," and was wordlessly declaring on the harmonica that "A sailor's wife a sailor's star should be," Sylvia cried out, apparently surprised: "Gabriel, there's a procession coming down the beach! An auto-truck and people walking. They look like—they are! Ruth, Sally Meade—girls and boys of Paxton!"

"Want to know!" Gabriel managed to ejaculate out of one corner of his mouth, not wishing to be so rude as to ignore Sylvia's information, but too thoroughly an artist to feel interest for the moment in anything beyond his tune.

"Gabriel, do look!" cried Sylvia.

Gabriel finished the final "Yo-ho!" of his air with a triumphant landing full in the middle of its high note, held the note, and ran down an octave for good measure, trilled awhile on the octave below the highest note, removed his harmonica from his lips, opened his eyes, drained the instrument, and exclaimed: "There!" with indescribable satisfaction.

Then he said: "Now what's botherin' you, Sylvie? Well, I declare, quite a number of our youthful feller citizens of both, in fact of all the sexes 'pear to be steerin' this way! Wonder what under the canopy's bringin' 'em in a body, so to speak?" The "youthful feller citizens" halted before Gabriel and Sylvia: Mate retreated to within the shack. The truck, with the organ wrapped in burlap, also halted.

"Gabriel Gaby," said Lloyd, stepping forward, "your friends and mine here have told me I had to

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speak a piece at you for them. I'm supposed to explain in beautiful language—English language, but of the better class!—what's up. But I don't seem to see it. I'm digging at dead languages in college, yet I don't seem to have one bud of flowery English. The fact of the matter is we had too much money left from our Grecian high jinks. We didn't know what to do with it, couldn't divvy it up, because it wasn't ours to have and to hold; didn't know what to do. Then the girl that you love best, Captain Sylvia, suggested that this superfluity gave us a chance to do what we'd all like to do, show you what a lot we thought of you. So we blew in our unsinkable fund in souvenirs from Baytide. They're in that truck, all but two, and those we have here. Now don't be dismayed! We—or Sylvia did—thought you'd find them useful when the wintry winds blow o'er your shack and give you shivers down your back! Hurrah for Gabriel Gaby!"

Lloyd led his own proposed cheers; they were an inspiration. It would have been hard to say how Gabriel was going to take his announcement, but the cheers swept away what might have developed into annoyance.

Before they had fairly died out the truck driver and his companion had the burlap off the organ, and were drawing it forward on the truck. To do this the rug first had to be thrown out; the rope that held it broke, and it unrolled, displaying its full brilliance, on the sand.

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"Where'll we set it?" asked the man with the organ balancing against his shoulders.

"Inside," said Gabriel Gaby, mechanically.

Then, as the men with the little organ went into the shack, Gabriel partly recovered from his stunned condition.

"Sylvie, will you see to it where they put it?" he asked. "There ain't room 'less things are shifted."

"Never mind where they put it; we'll straighten up," said Lloyd. "Sylvia thought you'd like to play and sing in the winter evenings, and she'll play and sing for you. Now, here is your clock, Gabriel, and a picture."

"I'll pass right out!" said Gabriel Gaby, staring at the clock. "I'd of given my head to dare to hope for such a clock as that! The comp'ny they are! And useful! Nobody needs a clock's much's the man that never has any need for time, 'cause he doesn't go anywheres partic'lar. He's the one that gits the full good 'f a clock, which's the comp'ny they are. I always did think it didn't make so much difference what a clock said about the time it was, 's did the way it said it, tickin' an' strikin' when you're alone. Ladies an' gentlemen," said Gabriel, suddenly arousing to the ceremonial obligations of the occasion. "If I was to talk till the flood come back to cover the earth, which we know won't never be, I couldn't say what I'm feelin', knowin', also, that I'll feel more 'n' more, the further I go in considerin'

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what you've done. I do wish an' hope you'll do one thing more, an' let yourself know the extent o' my appreciation, an' gratitood, fer I can't."

"Hear, hear!" cried Gerald Ritchie. "Gabriel, dear old Gabie Gaby—remember we boys used to call you that?—we've had more fun out of it than you will have, I am afraid. It was Sylvia Bell who suggested it, and told us what to get for you."

"Oh, well, Sylvie! I know all about Captain Sylvie!" said Gabriel, significantly.

Sylvia came out of the shack in time to hear this.

"Indeed you don't! But don't tell the dreadful things you do know!" she cried. "The organ is in there, Gabriel, but you'll have to decide where to put it. I'll be down to-morrow morning, and we'll try it."

The committee turned to go, Sally took Sylvia's arm and drew her along with her.

Ruth ran after them and seized Sylvia's other arm.

"My Sylvia!" she cried. "No fair, Sally Meade!"

"I guess I saw her first!" cried Sally, and the three went off down the beach, tall Sylvia in the middle.

Gerald lingered. He followed Gabriel Gaby into the shack, opened the organ, and softly tried it where it stood, out of place, on the floor of the crowded little room.

"You'll get it in after you've shifted things a bit," said Gerald, pumping with one foot and playing harmonies. "It's a good tone; we heard it in Baytide. Gabriel, tell me; you know Sylvia pretty well.

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Do you think it would be the least use if I tried? Do you think she cares one bit for me, compared—compared to her boat?"

"Gerald Ritchie, if you want the truth, no; I don't think 'twould be the least bit o' use," said Gabriel Gaby. "I think she likes you, but I don't think our girl's like the heft of 'em. She's got the happy, innocent heart in her of a little child, an' she's flyin' in the sunshine o' her youth, much like the gull yonder in the act'yal sunshine. Sylvie's as free's air, an' 's clear 's crystal. Her father's all she wants—an' her dog. 'Twouldn't be the least mite o' use, 'f you ask *me!*"

"I want her," said Gerald, turning away.

"You'd be a dunce not to," said Gabriel Gaby. "Best on earth, she is!"

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CHAPTER XVIII

"To Her Garlands Let Us Bring"

IT WAS September, with thirteen of its days left behind; almost half the month had slipped away. A strong wind was blowing, due west, racing over the dune tops, clean of earthly inperfections, ozone-charged, a rollicking, racing, high-spirited wind that filled mere mortals with its joyousness.

Sylvia Bell, who was at all times akin to this free, glad wind, especially yielded to it. She started out immediately after breakfast to run across the dunes with O'Malley, head up, eyes bright, lips parted, eager and intensely alive.

The terrier also found the day inspiriting. Leaping and running at imaginary game, O'Malley rushed ahead of Sylvia, stopping to worry the sticks tossed by the wind in his path, or bringing one back to Sylvia to be thrown for him, pretending to be excited over them, and making a great to-do about finding them though the wind was too strong to allow Sylvia to send them far.

"Oh, dog-of-the-world, you make believe as much as I do!" cried Sylvia, laughing at O'Malley's pretense of great doings. "Imagination and honour. That's not a bad outfit for a silly terrier brain."

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She ran headlong down the steep dune path and across the sands to Gabriel Gaby's shack.

"Isn't it a day?" she cried in lieu of "good morning." "I thought perhaps you'd like to have me play 'Glory Hallelujah' for you. It feels like that!"

"Well, to tell the truth, Sylvie, I was sort of wishin' I could make that organ shout," Gabriel admitted. "The nearest I can come to pickin' out a triumphal tune is 'My Country 'Tis of Thee.' And I always did feel that was a naytional hymn that sounded 's if you'd full as lieves be born somewhere else. Sort o' serious, 'specially when it's sung with expression. Most folks think it's singin' with feelin' to drag an' slur a tune like sin."

Sylvia laughed, enjoying this criticism.

"I'll play things as gay as I can. It's hard to be gay on a foot-pedalling organ, but I know some marches that are not out of key with a westerly wind like this."

"Wait a minute, Sylvie; wait a minute before you go inside," said Gabriel Gaby.

"It's nice out here. I was just sayin' to Mate that for all it's such a glorious day there's a leetle mite o' sense o' the solemn in it. The season's about bu'st up. Ain't many left in the hotel. The little chap I whittled out the submarine for, he went yest'day. Sort o' solemn when seasons end, if you've lived's many summers—not to speak o' the winters which are longer—'s I have."

"Nonsense, Gabriel! You're far more out of

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key than the most melancholy tune! Why, it's a great day, and you're the youngest person I know—except myself, and O'Malley! If our season is over, the Berkshire season is just coming on. Lots of these people go on to the mountains. To tell the truth, I don't mind the birds of passage flitting. I like Paxton best when we have it to our own Paxton selves." Sylvia patted Gabriel on the arm to infuse him with jollity. "And you will be cozy this winter with the warm rug and the sociable organ, now won't you?"

"I shall, Sylvie," said Gabriel. "I shall be. Mate 'n' I'll live high! That wa'n't meant for rhymin', but let it stand! I guess you won't get a chance to whoop it up for the west wind, an' the fine day on the organ, Sylvie. I see Jack Jarvis comin'."

"Oh, Sylvia!" cried Jack, his face lighting up as he saw her. "I was going to your house. Are you going home?"

"Yes," Sylvia spoke doubtfully, but reinforced her assent. "Yes, Jack; I was going to play and sing for Gabriel, but any time will do; I'm only out because it's so irresistible. 'Bye, Gabriel; I'll be down some time to-day. Anything special to say, Jack Jarvis, essentially of New York?"

"Well, I do like the little burg," Jack admitted. "I don't mind how you guy it; we can stand it, that village and me! Yes, I wanted to say farewell, but not for ever. I'm going off to-morrow early. Hermione's gone to that empty hotel. Say, Maida

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Clayton wanted her the worst way to stay with her. What do you know about that? The Claytons will be here late. Hermione said: 'Nay, Nay, Pauline', or words to that effect, only spoken prettily, of course! We're coming to Paxton for the wedding, Christmas week. We're going to have a wedding that'll be so fine that the account of it in the papers will be deposited in the corner stones of whatever they build around here next year; biggest thing ever hit Paxton! Wait till you hear about it! You'll be glad you're maid of honour!"

"Certainly I shall be! I am now, before I've heard the wedding plans!" cried Sylvia.

"I wanted to tell you something else, Sylvia," said simple Jack, awkwardly. "I want to say that I never in all my life saw, nor expect to see, a girl like you, but I'm satisfied as things are. You knocked me clean out, but you had the sense to knock me in again! When I saw Hermione dance, and saw what a plucky little thing she was, I—I liked her a whole lot! I wanted you to know everything was all right. It wouldn't be fair to anybody for you not to know it. It's going to be Just A Love Nest for us; we like each other good and plenty. I wanted you to know."

"Good for you, Jack Jarvis!" cried Sylvia. "You're a trump. I'm delighted, and I think Hermione Elmsley is going to make you happier right along. She's a fine girl, and she'll be a charm-

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ing mistress over a handsome establishment; she has sense and taste, and is clever. Far better for you than an old salt like me!"

"As to that," Jack shook his head, "Hermione doesn't mind that I think you're the—— Well, what you are! Sylvia, the whole bunch will be down for the wedding. You will meet Peggy, my father, the whole Jarvis contingent. Peg will be daffy over you; I know Peggy! She'll ask you this winter. Please make up your mind you're coming! I'd like just as much as ever to show you New York, show you *to* New York! You be ready to tumble into Peg's arms when she spreads 'em."

"I think we shall drive to the opposite ocean this winter, good old Jack," said Sylvia. "Maybe not, if we have to wait till after the wedding, at Christmas, to go. We'll see. Aren't you coming in?"

"No. I've spoken my little piece, and I'm going to take Hermione and Sally Meade for a long drive; likely to Boston and back to-night. Good-bye, Sylvia. Remember, it's Broadway for you by the middle of January!"

"Or Santa Barbara!" laughed Sylvia. "Good-bye, Jack. Tell Hermione I say she's a lucky girl, but that I send her my love."

"And so she is!" thought Sylvia, watching Jack down the street as she halted on the piazza. "It's not so bad, after all, to be so fond of someone that the whole world gets shaken into place around them, like spokes around a hub!"

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"Miss Sylvia," said Norah, coming out, "Mr. Ritchie is waiting for you. He walked down into the garden."

"Oh!" exclaimed Sylvia, with an undefined sinking at her heart. But she turned, and descended the steps to go around the house and out to find Gerald.

"Ah, Sylvia!" was all that Gerald said when he saw her; she had come so softly that he had not heard her step. It was not necessary to say more; his tone expressed his joy in the apparition.

"Won't you come back to the house, Gerald? Sorry I was out," Sylvia said.

"Would you mind staying here?" asked Gerald. "I have not much time left. I'm going away, Sylvia."

He had his eyes fastened upon her face, watching it keenly as he spoke, but Sylvia looked up at him with kindly, steady eyes, full of sympathy, yet holding nothing more for him.

"Already, Gerald? Your college doesn't open for two more weeks, you said," Sylvia suggested.

"I'm going to spend these two weeks with a classmate, a fellow I like awfully. I've had the house made ready to close it for the winter. There's not much fun staying on in it. A house closed is a dreary thing, don't you think?" Gerald asked.

"Indeed I do!" cried Sylvia. "I don't like to pass one, even though I don't know to whom it belongs. But try not to remember it as closed; try to think of it as it was!"

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"When it is so fundamentally different than it was? I'm afraid, Sylvia, that's beyond me." Gerald spoke with quiet sadness, making no bid for pity.

"I know that was a silly speech," said Sylvia, contritely. "Don't think I don't understand; I do. I love my father well enough to understand you. But at least try to believe, even though it doesn't seem possible now, that some day you will re-open the house to be happy in it."

"Sylvia, I could imagine it! I could know it was true; I could have a foretaste of the truth of that hope, if——" Gerald checked himself. "I don't think you care for me more than—— Do you think, Sylvia, that you would ever—want me back?"

"I shall want you to come back, Gerald," said Sylvia, gently. "I shall be glad to see you when you do come. I've grown downright fond of you. I'm fond of my friends, you know I am! But when I have my home, my boat, my chummy dog, and then my father, I can't miss any one badly, nor—— I feel like a horrid, selfish, cold-hearted *frog!* There! But I am happy all the time, whether men come or go—like Tennyson's Brook! Even Ruth. I love her dearly, but I can't feel sad without her, though I often wish she were here when she goes home."

"I am answered more fully than you quite realize, perhaps. I knew the answer when I asked the question," said Gerald, mournfully. "I wish I

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dared think it was only that you are still the sleeping princess of the fairy tale, and that I might come back and waken you. But something tells me that it will not be I, if ever someone does break through the growth of thicket that shuts you away in your friendly, sweet, inaccessible young girlhood. What about it, Sylvia?"

"I don't think I know, Gerald," said Sylvia, looking up at him, for Gerald was six feet tall, and a little more. Her eyes were wistful, and a trifle sad. "I am, as you say, shut away in my girlhood, just as much as I was ten years ago. Things and people keep calling me to waken, but I don't; I shut my eyes tight and turn away. I am perfectly happy when they let me alone; when I hear them calling it troubles me—but I do not move. Gerald, I ought to be truthful to you, because you are so unselfish, so fine, I like you so much! I don't know what will happen to Sylvia when she—if ever she wakes up, but it seems to me that it will not be you who wakens her. I may never waken; I hope I may not! I'd gladly stay here as I am, Sylvia Bell, her father's girl, and still childish, though so tall!"

"I'll go, Sylvia," said Gerald, huskily. "You are crystal clear, so sweetly kind and true! How can I help wanting you? God keep you, dear. Good-bye, Sylvia." Gerald left the garden by its rear gate, little used. Sylvia watched him away, standing motionless where he had left her.

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"I love him dearly!" she thought, mopping the tears on her cheeks with her finger tips, having groped vainly for her handkerchief. "I do love him, and I—I sort of revere him! I wonder what it all is about that it is so much and so little! I wonder why I cry because he's so desirable, and yet don't want him to stay—to stay inside, I mean!"

"I'm going sailing this afternoon, Cassie," Sylvia announced. "I seem to need the wide, wide sea!"

"Yes," said Cassandra, intelligently. "I saw Gerald waiting in the garden, and you come in without him, so I concluded you'd let him go—of course I mean by the rear gate! These things are wearing. I never was the kind to get worn in this way a whole lot, as it doesn't need a prophet to see you're going to be, but I had one experience, and it was worse'n having a tooth out. If it's any consolation to you to know, he said he'd kill himself, but he never did. He got married, and is the happy head of a many-headed family—nine, I believe, there were; children."

Sylvia laughed, and felt unexpectedly better for it. Cassandra was useful in all sorts of ways, but not least in her sensible way of seeing the events of life, and her unintentional humour in discoursing of them.

"I won't go out looking too disreputable," thought Sylvia, regarding wistfully her water-stained, sun-faded duck middy and its khaki skirt. "It's not like early morning to go out in the afternoon; I may see people capable of being shocked, and I suppose

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Aunt Emily is right, also Casabianca, in saying that I'm less Captain Sylvia now than Miss Sylvia Bell."

The result of this conscientious awakening was that Sylvia sallied forth looking particularly pretty in a white flannel dress and a close, small blue cap. She went so far as to adorn O'Malley with the marvellous collar which had been given to Sylvia for him three years before, in gratitude for the service that she had, somewhat accidentally, done her country in uncovering the lair of counterfeiting rascals who had ensconced themselves in the old Willis house at Paxton. Sylvia rarely allowed O'Malley to wear this collar, too fine for common use, or for safety from theft; a green leather collar, with silver trimmings, set with green tourmalines, in the form of shamrocks, artistically conveying recognition of O'Malley as an Irish terrier.

Sylvia ran along the beach, paused at Gabriel Gaby's shack, and was surprised to find Mate alone in charge. She ran on, O'Malley gleaming greenly around his neck as the tourmalines caught the sun's rays.

"You're not going to try it alone, are you?" said someone, and Sylvia faced around to see Lloyd behind her.

"You didn't make the least sound!" Sylvia said, half aggrieved; no one quite likes to be soundlessly come upon.

"Sneaks on the sands—invisible, inaudible," said Lloyd.

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"*Not* invisible!" retorted Sylvia, scanning Lloyd's feet. There was an established dispute between them on this subject, Lloyd maintaining that his feet were tiny, "for their size"; Sylvia that "their size was immense for its number."

These two found endless pleasure in talking utter nonsense.

"Be that as it may," Lloyd resumed, "were you going to try it alone?"

"Sure-ly! Why not?" said Sylvia.

"A seaman like you knows you must reef in this wind," Lloyd reminded her. "Hard work to tie the knots when the work is done by feeble feminine fingers, unaided!"

"Feeble masculine minds are not so tremendously helpful," observed Sylvia in a general way.

"I'm going with you, Tink!" announced Lloyd.

"Are you?" cried Sylvia. "Why didn't you say so in the first place, and save me from making that last remark? How could I even remotely suspect that you thought of going? And what I said must have sounded to you—having this hidden intention—almost personal."

"Oh, dear me, no! No, indeed! How could it?" cried Lloyd. "Here, hands off that rowboat! I run her down to the water and row you out. Know that, Tink?"

"Efficiency that surpasses the German!" murmured Sylvia to the air, but she let Lloyd have his way.

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Out on the little *Walloping Window Blind* Sylvia and Lloyd worked together putting in one reef. The wind was not so high as in the morning; one reef was enough, but that one was needed.

"Now here's where I come into my own!" said Sylvia after the catboat was cast off from her mooring, as she took the tiller and the sheet and ensconced herself in the stern, with the long breath that she usually breathed when she was off on her favourite pursuit.

"Where is Ruth? I wish we had her with us," Sylvia said, for the first time, if the truth were told, remembering that Ruth was missing.

"She has gone with Gerald Ritchie. He had a Baytide errand, something to do with insurance permit to close the house," said Lloyd, visibly hesitating as he spoke of Gerald.

"Ruth has seen him a good deal lately. She has helped him with his mother's personal belongings, and in other ways. She likes him a lot, and you know Ruth's a born helper and comforter."

Sylvia turned upon Lloyd a beaming face.

"She certainly is!" she cried. "If there's a creature in this world put into it to smooth rough paths and to console, it's sweet little Ruth Hapgood! Say, Lloyd, you don't suppose—after a while, you know! Wouldn't it be the best thing ever happened? Gerald is as splendid as—as splendour! And Ruth is—her dear little self! Wouldn't it be great if they *did*, you know?"

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"Sylvia! Well, Sylvia! You look set up by the mere possibility. Would you like it? You would like it! Well, my aunt! I thought—I was afraid——" Lloyd stopped.

"I'd grudge Ruth something? Not anything!" cried Sylvia. "And of all things that! I'd be so glad I'd have to be reefed myself, or I'd tip over! I'm so sorry for Gerald that I ache!"

"By all that's wonderful! And to have it come out so accidentally when I was——" Lloyd checked himself. He knew Sylvia too well to continue on that line.

"Sylvia, do you mind changing the subject abruptly? Or—well, you can decide later whether it is really changing it! I've got something to tell you, kind of a gift for you, if you'll look at it so. I've been at work all summer on a special course in English. Oh, not grammar!" he cried, seeing Sylvia about to interpolate a comment. "Now stop fooling; I'm serious! I took a course, and I've had special exams. and all that, and I've written a poem—or that's what they call it! And it's taken honours in a competitive affair. And there's a novelette, and an essay that they've been brooding over at college, and they've landed me high on the glittering sands of fame—or they may! Anyhow, I'm going back to college *with* my shield, not *on* it."

"Lloyd! Why, Lloyd! I never in all my life!" cried Sylvia, so amazed that she had to recall herself quickly from letting her boat go off her course.

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"You've been at work all summer, since vacation? And you dug like mad last year, at college, I know that! And you've written—— You! Lloyd, you don't *write*, you know!" Sylvia said, bewilderedly. "I've wondered why you went in for *belles lettres* at all, why you weren't in a scientific, or even a mechanical course."

"That's about what I thought you'd say," said Lloyd, not minding. "But you see, Tink, you're nuts on books and reading, so I had to try it. Then I liked it. Now they say I have talent, and shall make my mark—they don't mean a smudge, either!"

"How could you write a poem?" said Sylvia.

"If I tell you, I'm afraid you won't like it," said Lloyd. "Promise not to get offended. I thought of you, the way you move, your face, your ways—it wasn't hard, Sylvia!"

Sylvia looked into Lloyd's face, the colour slowly, painfully creeping up into her own face, her eyes full of wonder, and a dawning new expression, that was not unmixed with fear.

"Did you do it all for me?" she asked, softly.

"I had to do and be what I could for you, didn't I, Tink?" Lloyd said, using the old nickname under these dawning new, miraculous conditions.

He hummed a line of music, the Sylvia song, that they all called her own song.

"'To her garlands let us bring,' isn't it? I had to get some garlands," Lloyd said.

"Sylvia—Tinker Bell—don't you think one of

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these days, when you get big enough to like someone an awful lot, maybe it will be Lloyd Hapgood?"

"I don't know! I almost—think—maybe!" Sylvia said, still looking at Lloyd with wondering eyes. "I don't seem to understand—but you're Lloyd—and you're not!"

"Oh, yes, I am! Straight Lloyd!" he cried. "But I'm not much older than you, and there's a lot to be done. I wanted to know if you didn't think, when it was done, that you'd like me a good deal; say as well as your father? And that you don't think you're ever going to like any one else better than me?"

"I know that I couldn't! Isn't it strange? I didn't know that till just now, Lloyd, but it is true! I shall like you best, always, you and my father."

Sylvia drew the back of her hand across her dazed eyes in the boyish way that still was hers, and jammed her tiller hard down so that the boat swung around. "I'm going in, Lloyd. I'm going home," she said.

"Why, Tink, dear, you're not—— You don't mind, do you? You're not offended? It's all clear happy and—and great, Tink! Haven't we always been fond of each other?" cried the lad, groping his way in a mystery new, also, to him.

"Not like this! I want to go to my father. It's all right, Lloyd! I'm not mad; it isn't your fault, but—I'm awfully afraid it may be growing up! Let's go in!" cried Sylvia.

On the beach she bade Lloyd a speedy good-bye,

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and ran toward the dune path, yet at its foot she turned back and waved her hand, both hands, to him. Then she ran homeward, and into the house. Her father, in the library, heard her, and called:

"Is that Sylvia? Is that my little girl?"

"Yes, oh, yes, Father, it is!" cried Sylvia, hurrying to him. "It's your little girl, Sylvia. Nothing in all this world but your girl, Sylvia! And don't let anything catch her. It's dear to be tall, little Sylvia Bell!"

THE END

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